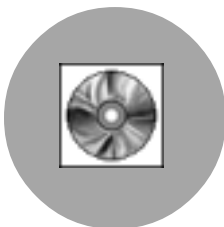


Stage Seven

Written Expression

About this Stage



The ability to clearly and independently express one's thoughts on paper is the most sophisticated skill in the Stages framework. Independent writing is a high-level skill that incorporates other literacy skills such as reading, spelling and organization. Because there is a separate teaching methodology associated with writing and the related software selection is unique, it is set aside as a separate Stage.

A learner's ability to write independently is essential to continuing her education, seeking employment, living independently, and communicating with others. When a learner writes a sentence, tremendous potential for academic independence begins. The skills involved in written expression include both language use and mechanical conventions such as spelling and grammar.

Writing skills are interwoven with other skills considered in earlier Stages. At Stage Four, a learner works on reading readiness skills by trying to write the letters of the alphabet, and perhaps her own name. She also begins to associate sounds with letters. At Stage Five, she uses writing skills to complete most academic assignments and projects. She writes simple sentences at first, and as her skills develop she will incorporate vocabulary words and content-related words she encounters in other subjects.

Keep in mind that learner independence in written language is the eventual goal. Learners with more intensive cognitive and language delay can work toward supported independence in their writing. Stage Six learners do not write for academic purposes, but are expected to master functional

writing skills that are needed for real-world efforts, such as writing shopping lists and filling in job applications.

About the Software



Importance of Auditory Feedback

Research on how best to accommodate the writer with learning challenges indicates that multisensory writing environments can be very effective. Felzer (1998) concluded that learners learn to read and write by seeing, hearing, saying, and singing words. The study showed that singing can even improve a learner's ability to retain sight words and phonetic sounds.

It is widely accepted that the more senses the learner uses, the better she will understand and remember the skills addressed. Giving learners the opportunity to apply both eyes and ears to the writing process employs this multisensory advantage. The computer offers a medium where learners can benefit from the visual presentation of letters and words combined with sound.

People with learning challenges can greatly benefit from using a word processing program that takes advantage of the computer's text-to-speech capability. What we generally call talking writing software offers a range of options. For further discussion of this topic, refer to "Why, How, and For Whom We Need to Use Talking Word Processors," a paper by William Peet, Ph.D., available on the Web at www.drpeet.com/whyhow.htm.

Software Selection Tips



At Stage Seven, look for software that offers:

- ✓ spoken readback of text that is typed: by letter, word, sentence and paragraph
- ✓ options for setting text size and color
- ✓ options for setting background color
- ✓ rate enhancement features such as word completion, word prediction and abbreviation expansion
- ✓ the ability to customize the pronunciation of words
- ✓ the ability to change voices

Relevant Issues



The Emotional Side of Learning

Using auditory feedback such as text-to-speech can enhance a learner's ability to self-correct her writing errors. This builds both independence and self-esteem. Turning on or off features that offer auditory reinforcement eventually gives the learner full control over the writing and editing process. Using headphones helps make this process more private. If two learners are working cooperatively, a simple audio splitter cable, available from any electronics shop, allows them to work together, both hearing their work simultaneously through headphones. While skills evolve, assess how and to what degree the learner uses auditory feedback. For example, is she helped by an auditory support that reads back each word as she types it?

Some learners will be inspired to write independently to express their feelings and ideas, sharing them as they choose, whereas others use their writing skills to organize more practical information, such as a list of friends and their birthdays.

Using Manipulatives

Learners who fall within the range of skills and strategies incorporated in the Stages philosophy are sometimes challenged by conventional writing tools such as pencil, paper, and print dictionaries. Therefore, the Stages approach supports the use of manipulatives such as hand-held electronic spell checkers or personal word lists even in an assessment setting. This presents an opportunity to see if the learner can apply the use of these tools to respond to the activities.

A word wall is another type of manipulative that learners can use during writing activities. A word wall is a way to display study words in a readily accessible place so that learners can refer to them during reading and writing tasks. For example, in a classroom the words are typically mounted on colored paper to facilitate learning groups of words. Then the mounted words are taped on the wall or pinned to a bulletin board in alphabetical order. Teachers use various strategies for selecting appropriate words, and then use the word wall for classroom activities designed to help learners master them.

Poor handwriting skills can sometimes affect a learner's willingness or enthusiasm for writing. Choose computer fonts (type styles) designed to look like handwriting, both printing and script, to make the printed assignment look more polished. Having a neatly printed page will give a learner pride in her work.

Writing Opens Doors for Learners

As fluency is gained, written language can become a vehicle for recreation and independence. The ability to communicate effectively through writing opens new doors, even on the computer, where the Internet, e-mail, and chat rooms can provide dynamic ways for individuals with writing challenges to foster social relationships and create access to products and information from all over the world.

Reading and Writing as Parallel Skills

Once the learner becomes a more confident reader, developing more advanced writing skills is natural. Build upon the reading skills already acquired to transition toward independent writing. Activities that practice spelling and word recognition skills are important for both writing and reading.

Educational experts believe reading and writing are parallel skills. According to Marilyn Adams (1998), "Research indicates that children's achievements in reading and writing are generally quite strongly and positively related. Further, across evaluations of beginning reading programs, emphasis on writing activities is repeatedly shown to result in special gains in reading achievement." Stage Five language arts and reading software is therefore very appropriate for practicing Stage Seven written language skills.

Stepping Stones toward Writing

The concept of learning to write can seem overwhelming to the learner. However, when steps are approached one at a time, progress is more likely.

The first step in learning to write is to allow plenty of time for the learner to explore the word processor as a tool for associating sounds and identifying letters. Free, divergent exploration is fine at first. At this phase, set the readback feature to speak each letter as it is typed.

The second step is to help the learner toward convergent thinking by building words out of letters. Words are the building blocks of all writing content. A beginning writer may be unable to create a word on her own, but can copy a model. Researchers suggest that the first words a learner writes independently should have a personal connection to make them more meaningful (Cunningham (1999) and Adams (1998)). On a sheet of paper next to the computer, clearly print some words of interest to the learner, such as family names, address information, or other familiar words. Then let the learner practice copying these words by typing them into the word processor. Speech readback, which should be set to speak each word, can help with word recognition as well as reinforce interest in the writing process.

Typical words include:

the learner's name	names of pets
names of family members	names of therapists
names of friends	favorite toys
favorite foods	favorite TV character
favorite TV programs	favorite sports
favorite sports hero or celebrity	vocabulary words
the learner's street, city and state	seasonal words
rhyiming words	

While this is a good starting point, copying words is a motor task, not a writing task. Writing comes when the learner is able to generate words independently, without a model. Educators traditionally consider that a learner is ready for more intricate writing experiences when she can independently write single words beyond the personal level.

Next, the learner builds sentences out of words. She can start by selecting or copying a word to finish a sentence. Rhymes are especially fun to complete. There are very useful spelling patterns commonly found in rhyming word families (such as _at: at, cat, bat, hat, and so forth). In many rhyming words, a learner can understand that words with the same vowels and ending letters fit a pattern. This is an important skill because it will help the learner attempt to write unfamiliar words once she becomes familiar with the word pattern. As she advances, she will also learn that two rhyming words can sometimes be spelled using different word patterns, such as "bite" and "light."

Stage Seven Focus:

- **read and write independently**
- **use correct spelling and grammar**

She can also choose a subject, verb, and object from a list of known words to convey a thought. It is important to provide word choices that are appropriate for the learner's reading level and that clearly fit the content to facilitate the understanding of the writing process. Set the speech readback to read each word or each sentence as it is completed.

Some learners will combine words and symbols or pictures to get their written message across. Others will use their own inventive phonetic approach to spelling. Both methods indicate that they are developing an understanding of how written language works.

Learners who are encouraged to use invented spelling develop an early and strong sense of phonemic awareness. Contemporary research in writing and reading indicates that developing a strong sense of letters and the sounds they make is essential. If a learner can identify the letters in a word by the sounds they make, she can become a better reader and writer. Be sure to let the inventive speller work without interruption. Correcting her while she writes will interrupt her flow, and may impede her sense of independence, as well as lead to inaccurate data about her skill level.

As the learner begins to write words and sentences, she can use auditory feedback and hear her work read back to her. This will help her develop skills in proofreading, editing and rewriting.

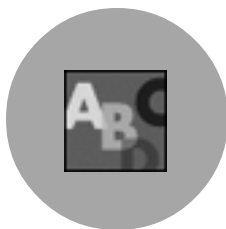
An important part of writing is thinking through information and formulating and organizing concepts. Software programs from Inspiration Software, Inc. (Inspiration® and Kidspiration®) can help the learner develop a visual concept map that serves as a blueprint for her writing. They are graphical organizers of ideas. Learners can use both pictures and words to outline and visually organize their ideas and topics prior to putting their words on paper.

The eventual goal is for learners to build brief stories or narratives by writing a series of sentences. At first, they may finish a story begun for them, until they are ready and willing to initiate their own.

It is up to the observer to interpret a learner's writing and to look for the target skills the learner has been taught. Gram-

mar, punctuation, spelling, and word use or syntax are areas that may be evaluated. If these are areas in which the learner has been working, and classroom instruction has already addressed them, by all means consider these as you correct or grade stories the learner writes. If these areas have not yet been addressed, or if the story printout indicates that work is needed in specific written language areas, there is software that can be used for day-to-day practice in support of this learning. For each learner the expectations for written language use will be different as she develops her own unique skill set.

Extension Activities



Place flash cards in a recipe card holder or similar-sized box so the learner can copy single words into a word processor. This process, requiring careful attention to detail and accuracy, is an exacting way for the learner to transition between the word she is reading to the word being written or typed.

Put a list of words, perhaps in a different color, at the beginning or end of a story containing missing words. Ask the learner to cut and paste choices from your word list into the story where words are missing.

For alternative keyboard users, create a whole word overlay for early readers and writers to use. Building sentences encourages budding writers to produce more.

Set the speech feedback in the software with text-to-speech capability to letter-by-letter for early readers and writers. That way they can independently hear both the spelling and the pronunciation of each word entered. For example, if a learner spelling the word “cow” types “C0W” (with a zero instead of the letter O), she will immediately hear the mistake, as the computer will speak “C zero W”, not “C oh W”.

Several studies have found that a fixed number of key words accounts for almost half of all the words we read and write. Among these are 10 words that account for almost a quarter of these words—the, of, and, a, to, in, is, you, that, it. These words, called the High-Frequency words, are difficult to teach because they do not carry meaning in isolation. Their meaning must be determined from within the context of

what the learner is reading and writing. It is believed among reading specialists that as soon as possible, learners should know how to read and spell these high-frequency words.

Create as many ways as possible for learners to practice these words. Light-tech approaches could be a special set of flash cards or a small separate word wall. Using a computer with a talking word processor can help learners master this fixed set of important words.

All of these activities represent great ways to foster proof-reading skills and comprehension.

There are several options for portable light-tech devices for note-taking or writing practice. For example, the AlphaSmart (AlphaSmart®, Inc.) is a simple keyboard that stores text and displays a few lines of text for the learner as she composes her thoughts. If she is able to use a regular keyboard, she can scroll through the text as she brainstorms or drafts her writing. If the learner requires auditory support for this process, consider a device such as the LINK™ (Assistive Technology, Inc.), a keyboard that speaks what the learner types.

About the Learner



Observable Characteristics

Watch for indications that the learner can

- ❖ read and write words independently
- ❖ spell words correctly
- ❖ compose thoughts grammatically
- ❖ use written language to express understanding and original thought
- ❖ retell a story in the proper sequence
- ❖ use menus and tools in a word processor
- ❖ use hand-held spelling tools or word walls

Competency Goals

In this Stage the learner explores and then masters written communication. The local school district can suggest activities for both home and school to build grammar and creative writing skills. Practice spelling and using electronic writing tools that promote written language.

Sample IEP Objectives

Written objectives for the learner at this Stage are typical of the written language skills addressed in school curricula. Types of writing that learners are asked to create include poetry, stories, reports and, eventually, research papers. Techniques that help them learn to write in these different styles are put to use, regardless of their abilities. However, the writing tools used may differ from one learner to the next.

Given *name of program* ("talking" writing software), the learner will

- ❖ write a 3-sentence story containing at least 15 words with all words used and spelled correctly
- ❖ use the software to correct spelling errors in a composition with 80% accuracy
- ❖ use the software to correct grammatical errors in a composition with 80% accuracy
- ❖ spell the ten high-frequency words (the, of, and, a, to, in, is, you, that, it) with 80% accuracy

A learner with more advanced writing skills could

- ❖ write monthly book reports using guided writing prompts, including a description of one part of the story
- ❖ use the computer to contribute to a classroom or family newsletter
- ❖ organize thoughts and information to create a special topic report
- ❖ write a story independently that contains a beginning, middle and end.

These objectives are measured by adult observation.

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Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22191

An Overview of the Activities

Introduction

Writing is the focus of Stage Seven. The assessment activities assess a learner's skill in generating words, then sentences, then paragraphs and stories. Stage Seven activities also reveal the environment in which a learner is most likely to write independently.

When a learner writes a sentence, tremendous potential for academic independence begins. Written language is more formal and might feel more threatening than spoken language because someone else will be reading the work and examining it for both language use and mechanical conventions like spelling and grammar.

In Stage Seven, the learner is first asked to copy words, eventually generating the words on her own. While watching for this skill to evolve, we can consider auditory feedback during the writing process. We can also consider the learner's ability to hear and see rhyming patterns in the way words are formed and spelled. Next the learner is asked to form sentences. We can consider the amount of support a learner needs by the way that the levels of the activities are designed. Finally, we can consider the learner's ability to generate a story independently. Using pictures and possibly story starters, we can consider how the story gets generated and how the learner writes on her own.

Stage Seven activities provide several ways to support learner success:

- personal word lists
- word editors to help personalize writing
- picture choices to help her develop story themes
- word walls in some activities from which a learner can choose entire words
- grammatically-correct cues to help her express her thoughts more readily.

Finally, it is important to note that there is no time pressure for the learner to complete the activities. Take as long as needed in order for the learner to have a comfortable amount of time to generate writing on her own. Encouraging the learner along the way is permitted.

Use the Stage Seven activities to measure learner achievement in specific writing skill areas. Take into consideration the environment under which the learner performs best. For example, is letter-by-letter auditory feedback needed for success? Once you determine the best writing environment, use the Software Comparison Chart following page 73 to find which software programs will support the learner. Keep in mind that learner independence in written language is the eventual goal. Learners with more intensive cognitive and language delay can work toward supported independence in their writing.

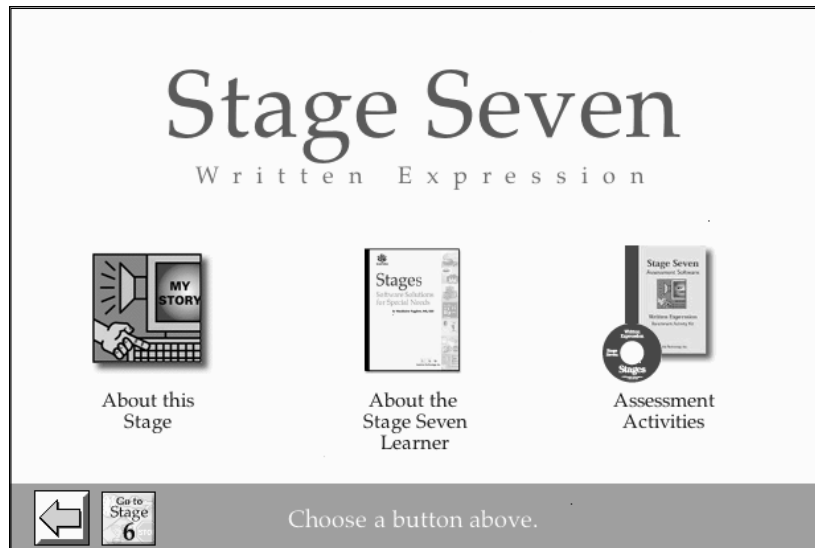
Starting Stage Seven

Before using the activities with a learner, become familiar with them yourself. Full descriptions of each activity begin on page 18.

The Stage Seven activities are designed to use text-to-speech technology, which converts typed text into speech. Although you can go through the activities without text-to-speech installed on your computer, you will not be taking advantage of the full value of the activities.

When you first start up Stage Seven, the program will detect whether text-to-speech is already installed on your computer and notify you if it is not present. Macintosh computers generally come with text-to-speech installed, so you will probably not see a message. If you are using a Windows computer without text-to-speech installed, you will be given an opportunity to install it then, which requires just a few mouse clicks. Refer to page 15 for more information about text-to-speech and other special Stage Seven features.

The main screen presents information about Stage Seven and leads you to the Stage Seven activities.



- Click **About this Stage** to learn more about Stage Seven.
- Click **About the Learner** to learn more about the learner at this stage. This information is covered in more detail in the section of this guide starting on page 8.
- Click on **Assessment Activities** to begin the activities.

Entering the Learner's Name

When you choose to start the Stage Seven Activities, you will first be asked to enter the learner's name. This name will be printed on the report that is generated when the activity is completed.

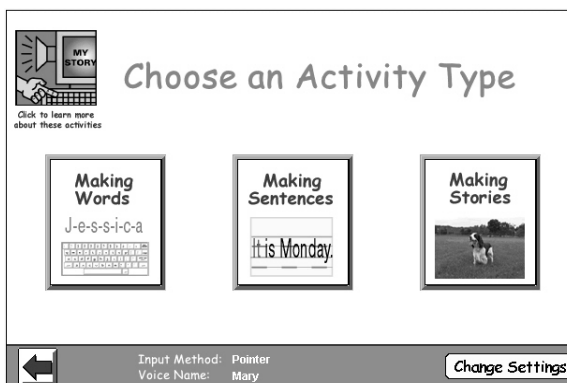
Type the learner's name in the text box in the center of the screen, then click the **Continue** button or press <return> (Macintosh) or <enter> (Windows) to go on.

Setting Preferences

There are many preference settings you can change that affect all the activities. Some current settings are displayed at the bottom of the menu screens. Refer to page 34 for explanations of these and other settings and information on how to change them.



Navigating Stage Seven Activities



In this screen you will select a button to choose an activity type: Making Words, Making Sentences, or Making Stories.

The following sections explain the choices you will make for each type of activity. Click the buttons on the screen to make choices.



Use the **Back** button in the lower left corner of the screen to return to the previous selection screen.



If you wish to leave an activity before the learner completes it, select the **Exit** arrow in the upper right corner of the screen. If the learner is using a switch, press <esc> to pause scanning in order to click this button. Note that if you leave an activity using this arrow, you will not be able to include its data in graphs using Stages Report Wizard.

Don't skip out of an activity that you want to graph later in Stages Report Wizard.

At the end of each activity, you can choose a different activity, change settings, or go to the report. The report automatically records various aspects of the learner's performance. For complete information about the reports, see page 41.

Special Stage Seven Features

Text-to-speech

Text-to-speech plays an important role as a multisensory tool in the Stage Seven activities. Text-to-speech converts printed text to the spoken word using a computerized voice and can make a valuable contribution to the writing process for a Stage Seven learner. She can hear what she has typed, identify errors, and work toward correcting her mistakes.

The activities will still function if you don't have text-to-speech installed, but their value will be diminished.

Text-to-speech comes built into the Mac® OS. If, when Stage Seven begins, you see a message that text-to-speech is not installed on your Macintosh computer, refer to the Technical Q & A section for help in activating it.

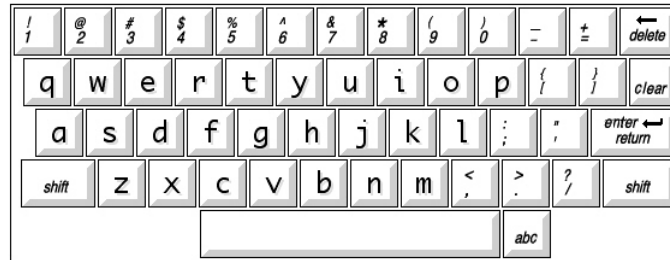
Computers running Windows 2000 have built-in text-to-speech. For those using machines running Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows NT, the Microsoft English text-to-speech is supplied on the Stages CD and will automatically be installed when you first start Stage Seven, if you choose to install it.



In the activities, whenever you see a **Speak** button, you or the learner can use it to hear the text in the current text box. You can choose a readback voice in the Preference settings screen, or at the beginning of each activity.

Onscreen keyboard

Learners who cannot use a standard keyboard to type can use an onscreen keyboard to enter text in the Stage Seven activities. If you are using the Mouse and Keyboard input setting, you can choose whether to use the onscreen keyboard. All other input methods require the onscreen keyboard. (The Building Sentences activity does not need to offer the onscreen keyboard, as the activity is accessible to all learners without it.)



The onscreen keyboard can be used with either direct selection and scanning input methods.

- With direct selection, mouse, touchscreen or alternative pointer (such as headmouse) learners can go directly to any key and select it to type it into the text box.
- You can press a switch to start autoscanning. Press the switch again to select the row, then the half-row, then the key that you want. Autoscanning begins automatically after each selection is made. Autoscanning pauses after 3 cycles through the current group or if the <esc> key is pressed. To resume autoscanning, press the switch again.
- When step scanning with a keyboard or two switches, press <tab> to move between selections and <return> or <enter> to select the highlighted selection. Keyboard scanning works in groups: first select the row, then the half-row, then the individual key. If you are using two switches, set one to send a <tab> keystroke and the other to send a <return> or <enter> keystroke. Step scanning will stop after 3 cycles through the current group or if the <esc> key is pressed.

Select the <delete> key to erase the last character entered. Select the <clear> key to erase all text in the learner's text box. Select the <enter>/<return> key to enter your response. (In the Making Stories activity, selecting this key starts a new line.)

Select the <abc> key to change the format of the keyboard from a QWERTY layout to an alphabetical layout. The <shift> keys have a sticky key feature that keeps them depressed until the learner presses the letter to be capitalized or the symbol key she wants to type.

Customizing the text display

Another valuable aspect of these activities is the ability for you to customize text settings for individual learners. Access the text display screen by choosing Text Settings on the Preferences screen (see page 38) or clicking the sample box on the Settings screen in most activities.

You can choose:

- font: choose from **plain**, **classroom**, and **Roman**. The classroom font presents letters as learners are taught to print them. Compare 'a' and 'g' in the Roman font with 'a' and 'g' in the classroom font.
- style: check this box to present text in bold.
- size: choose a size from small (24 pt) to jumbo (72 pt). Jumbo text is approximately one inch tall. **Note:** larger text sizes may limit the amount of text the learner can type in the text box. The High Frequency (Assess) and Rhyming Words (Assess) activities use a fixed font size.
- text color: choose a color for the letters the learner types.
- background color: choose a color for the area behind the text.

Experiment with various combinations to find the combination best suited to your learner. Some learners may require dark letters on a light background, whereas others may be more successful using light letters on a dark background. For

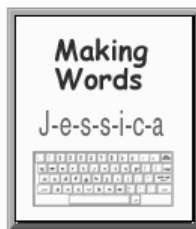
example, yellow text on a dark blue background has shown to be successful with many learners.

When using the onscreen keyboard, your font size options may be limited to smaller font sizes, as the keyboard takes up a larger portion of the screen.

You have an opportunity to see a sample of the current text settings and change them, if desired, before you start each activity.

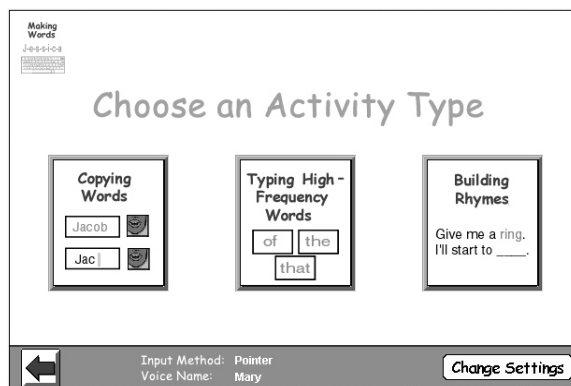
Stage Seven Activities

Making Words



Be sure to read the research behind these activities in the Stage Seven chapter from the Stages book, beginning on page 4.

Making Words is an important skill set to consider because words are the building blocks of all writing content. In these activities personal words that have special meaning for the learner can be used to foster learner interest in the process of writing. Educators traditionally consider that a learner is ready for more intricate writing experiences when she can independently write single words beyond the personal level.

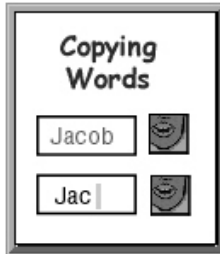


When a developing learner begins to write, her first lesson is learning how to form the letters of her own name by copying the letters from a model. While this is a good starting point, it is a motor task, not a writing task. The **Making Words** activities are designed so that the learner can take steps

toward independence, with each step analyzed for success. Each level leads her toward being able to write the word independently.

Copying Words

In the **Copying Words** activity, you can generate a list of up to 10 personal words. Because these words will be spoken aloud, you have an opportunity to add a phonetic spelling. This way the learner will hear the word as it is properly pronounced when she is asked to write it. The activity will help you determine how much auditory support is needed for her success.

A screenshot of the 'Enter Words for Word Copy Activity' interface. The title is 'Enter Words for Word Copy Activity'. Below the title, there is a text box for 'Your Word List' and a text box for 'Phonetic Spellings'. To the right of the 'Phonetic Spellings' box is a speaker icon with the word 'Speak' below it. At the bottom of the interface, there are five buttons: 'Menu', 'Save', 'Open', 'Clear', and 'Print'. A 'Next' button is also visible on the right side.

Step 1: Create the word list for the activity.

At the opening screen, you can enter a list of words for the learner to type during the activity. In the first column, type the correct spelling of the word. Click the **Speak** button to hear the word where the text cursor is. If the computer does not pronounce the word the way you want to hear it, you can enter an alternative spelling in the box to the right of each word, in the column named **Phonetic Spellings**. For example, to have the computer correctly pronounce the town of Leominster, Massachusetts, you would need to enter "Lemons-ter" as its phonetic spelling.

Click the **Tips** button to get ideas for types of words that might be useful or interesting to your learner. By beginning with personal words, we encourage a learner's interest and participation. Building from there might include branching out to include study words that relate to familiar experiences, such as safety words like "fire," "help," or "doctor."

As noted earlier, typical words include:

the learner's name	names of pets
names of brother and sisters	names of therapists
names of friends	favorite toys
favorite foods	favorite TV character
favorite TV programs	favorite sports
favorite sports hero or celebrity	vocabulary words
the learner's street, city and state	season words
rhyiming words	

The list of 10 words will remain on the activity screen until you choose a different learner, erase the list, or exit Stage Seven. Select the **Clear** button to erase the current list of words. To save the word list so that it will be available for another session, click the **Save** button. Choose an appropriate name for the file when prompted. You can save the file to any location on your hard drive or to the default location: the My Documents folder (Windows) or the Desktop (Macintosh).

To open a previously saved word list, click the **Open** button. Navigate to your saved file, click the file name, then click the **Open** button in the dialog box. To print the current screen, click the **Print** button. When you have finished entering the word list, click the **Next** button at the lower right of the screen to continue.

Step 2: Customize the activity.

Choose Word Copy Settings

☒ **LEVEL ONE:**
See and copy word.
Letter feedback

☐ **LEVEL TWO:**
See and copy word.
Word feedback

☐ **LEVEL THREE:**
Hear and write word.
Word feedback

Present words in random order? ☒ **yes** ☐ **no**

☒ Does the user need an onscreen keyboard? ☐ **yes** ☒ **no**

Current Voice: Mike **Change Voice**

Click "Sample" box to change text settings.

sample

Modify List **Begin Activity**

At the Choose Word Copy Settings screen you can customize the activity for your learner. Choose the level for this activity, which specifies whether the target word is displayed on the

screen and what type of speech readback is used in the activity. At any level, the learner can hear the text she has typed by selecting the **Speak** button.

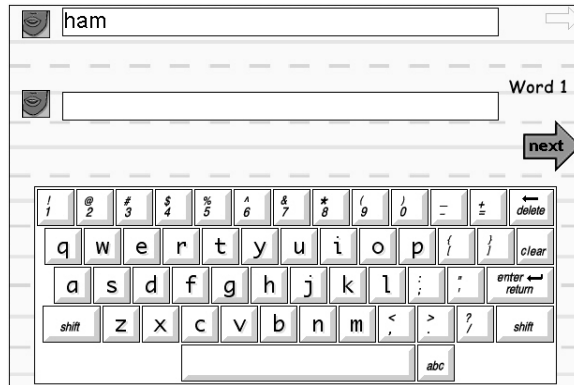
- At Level One, the learner sees and hears the target word she is to type. She also hears the name of each letter as she types.
- At Level Two, the learner sees and hears the target word she is to type. Individual letters do not speak as she types, but each word speaks when she enters a space.
- At Level Three, the learner only hears the word she is to type. It does not appear on the screen. Individual letters do not speak as she types, but each word speaks when she enters a space.

If you want to present the words in a randomly-selected order, select 'yes' at the question: "Present the words in random order?" This is the initial setting. If you select 'no' the words will be presented in the order in which you entered them.

If the learner needs to use the onscreen keyboard, click the 'yes' button on this screen. (See page 16 for more information on using the onscreen keyboard.) **Note:** if you are using a Mercury or MiniMerc (from Assistive Technology, Inc.) plug in an external keyboard or use the onscreen keyboard to enter text on this screen.

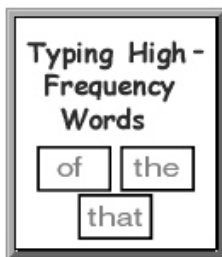
The **Speak** button speaks the name of the voice currently selected. The name of this voice is also displayed after "Current Name." Click the **Change Voice** button to listen to and select a different computer voice for reading the learner's words. Click the **Sample** box to change text options (font, size, color and style).

Once you have made these adjustments, you can invite the learner to join you at the next screen, which has instructions for the activity. Here, a sample set of sentences orients the learner to the task. When you are ready to start the activity, click the **Begin Activity** button at the lower right corner of the screen.



In Levels One and Two, the target word appears in the upper text box. Selecting the **Speak** button in front of that box will speak the word (or its phonetic spelling, if one has been entered for that word).

The learner enters her word in the lower text box. She can hear her word at any time by selecting the **Speak** button at the beginning of that line. When the learner has finished entering her word, she can select the **next** button. If the word has been accurately typed, she sees a reward and moves to the next word. Otherwise she receives two more opportunities to type the word correctly.



The **Typing High-Frequency Words** and **Building Rhymes** activities are organized into Explore and Assess activities. The Explore (Divergent) activities provide an orientation to the content of the activities. No data is recorded and there are no reports for these sections. Explore activities give the learner a comfortable exposure to the content before expecting her to demonstrate understanding of it in the Assess (Convergent) activities.

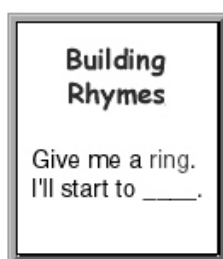
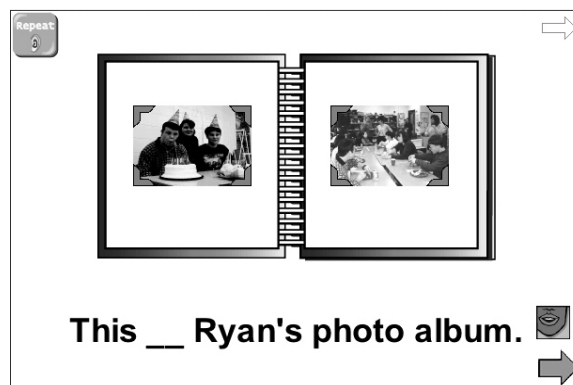
Typing High-Frequency Words

Reading and writing experts agree that the following 10 words make up 25% of everything we read and write: *the, of, and, a, to, in, is, you, that, and it*. Cunningham (2000) states “As soon as possible, all children should learn to read and spell these high-frequency words.” Learners need to know how to spell these words. However, high-frequency words are difficult to learn because they have little meaning in

isolation. In this activity the learner uses the 10 words to complete captions in a photo album for a birthday party. The photo album provides a context she can use to understand and then write these words independently.

The **Explore** activity presents the photo album and accompanying story. After selecting the **Assess** activity you can choose whether to use the onscreen keyboard and select a different voice for readback, if desired. You can choose a color for the high-frequency words the learner types at the Settings window. The next window provides instructions that can be shared with the learner.

When the activity begins, the learner hears the complete sentence spoken. Her job is to write the missing word. She can hear the sentence with the word she types by selecting the **Speak** button. She can select the **Repeat** button to hear the target sentence with the missing word. When she selects the green arrow to go on, the computer responds with a reward if her word is correct. If the word is incorrect, she has two more opportunities to correct the word before it is shown to her.



Building Rhymes

There are very useful spelling patterns commonly found in one-syllable words. In many rhyming words, a learner can understand that words with the same vowels and ending letters fit a pattern. She will also learn that sometimes two words that rhyme are spelled quite differently. This is an important skill because it will help the learner attempt to write unfamiliar words once she becomes familiar with the word pattern.

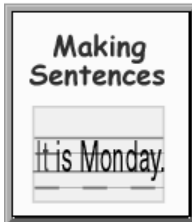
This activity uses rhyming couplets, leaving out two rhyming words for the learner to fill in. When completed, the first four rhymes have pairs of words that begin with different letters, but end with identical spellings that make the same ending sound: pet/jet, bug/rug, bake/cake and goat/boat. The last two rhymes have pairs of words that begin with different letters and end with different spelling patterns that make the same ending sound: eat/feet and kite/night. The last two word pairs represent a more sophisticated skill because the learner must be able to hear the sound and recognize more than one way to spell the sound of words that rhyme.

The **Explore** activity presents the rhymes. The letters in each of the two rhyming words appear in red. After selecting the **Assess** activity, you can customize the settings (including text color). Click the Sample box to change text settings (see page 17 for more information). You can select a different voice for readback, if desired. The next window provides instructions that can be shared with the learner.

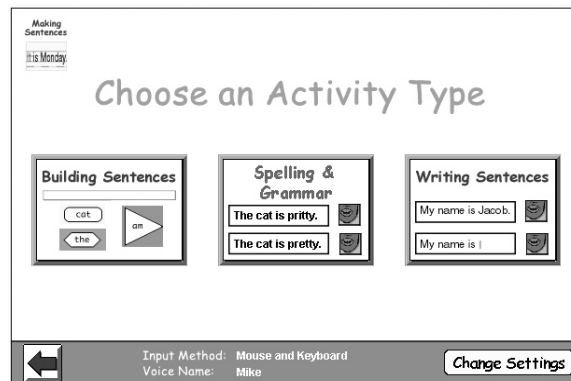
The learner hears each rhyme spoken, and then can type the two missing words. In the **Rhyming** activity, use the <tab> key or the <next word> key on the onscreen keyboard to move the text cursor from one text field to the next. The **Speak** button on each line reads the learner's text. The **Repeat** button speaks the rhyme as it should be completed. The learner should click the **Done** arrow after she has typed both words. If the words are correct, she sees an animation of the rhyme. If one word is incorrect, she has an opportunity to retype that word. If both words are incorrect, she can retype both words. After three attempts, the learner is shown the missing words. The report will show all words that were attempted.



Making Sentences



In these activities, the learner begins to combine words to form sentences. She moves from completing sentences begun for her to composing sentences independently. Part of this process is understanding how sentences are put together grammatically—that sentences need a subject and a verb that agree, for example. Finally, the learner must be able to look for and correct errors of many types. The activities in this section focus, therefore, on building a correct sentence.

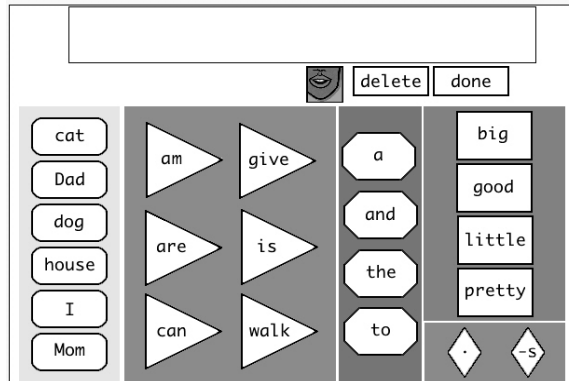


Building Sentences

In this activity, the learner creates a sentence by clicking on words already selected for her use. The activity is self-paced to give the learner an opportunity to create her sentence independently.

The activity uses three levels of words:

Level (Grade) 1 words are organized by color and shape to help the learner construct a grammatically correct sentence. All nouns or words that can be used as subjects appear on oval buttons on a yellow background. All verbs appear in triangular buttons on a pink background. Prepositions, articles and conjunctions appear in octagonal buttons on a green background. Adjectives appear on rectangular buttons on a blue background. Special buttons for adding a period and an 's' to a word appear on diamond-shaped buttons on an orange background.



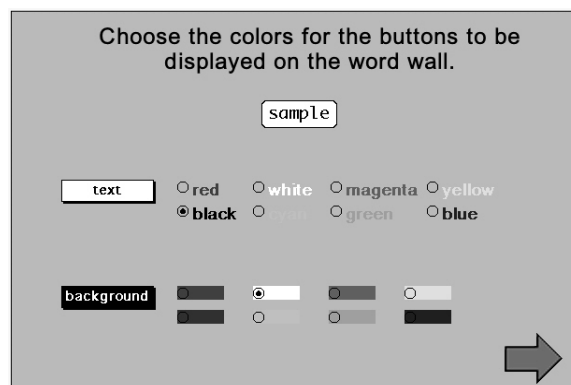
For switch and keyboard scanners, the words are scanned in groups, from left to right. After selecting the group, the learner then selects a word within the group and it is placed in the text box at the top of the screen.

Levels (Grades) 2 and 3 do not use the color and shape support for the grammatical construction of sentences:

Level (Grade) 2 combines both Grade 1 words and Grade 2 words. They are arranged alphabetically on a word wall and can be selected in any order. The report will show how many words from each level the learner used in her sentence.

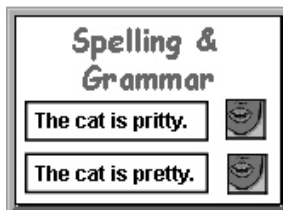
Level (Grade) 3 combines words from all three levels. Again, they are arranged alphabetically on a word wall and can be selected in any order. The report will show how many words from each level the learner used in her sentence.

At the beginning of the Level 2 and 3 activities you can change the button and text color of words on the word wall.



At all levels, the learner can use the **Speak** button to hear the current sentence or words entered so far. She can use the **delete** button to remove words, one at a time, and she can use the **done** button to hear the complete sentence again, before exiting to the report.

The Stages CD contains three IntelliKeys® overlays that match the screens for the three levels in this activity. If the Stage Seven program detects that IntelliKeys is attached, the appropriate overlay is automatically loaded. For more information on using and printing these overlays, refer to the ReadMe file for Stage Seven in the IntelliKeys folder on the Stages CD.



Spelling & Grammar

An important aspect of the writing process is proofreading, editing, and rewriting. Any writer needs to take the time and care to make sure her writing is accurate and reflects her intent. In this activity, learners will show how well they can locate and correct errors in writing.

The **Spelling & Grammar** activity provides sets of sample sentences, organized by spelling or grammatical content. Each set contains 5 sentences, which can be used as is, or edited to suit a particular learner's needs. In addition, you can enter your own custom list of sentences.

The initial screens allow you to set up the activity. The learner should not be present, as the correct answers will appear on the screen. The program will let you know when the activity is about to begin so you can invite the learner to join you.


At the opening screen, you can choose the category of sentences with errors. A sample sentence appears for each set. These sentence sets represent areas in which students are likely to make errors, and for which practice software is available to build skills. If you wish to create your own set of sentences, choose the "Custom: Make your own sentences." radio button.

Spelling & Grammar

Choose a set of sentences.


Evaluator: Set up this activity before the learner joins you, as clicking a choice below will reveal the correct answers.

<input type="radio"/> Spelling <input type="radio"/> Homonyms <input type="radio"/> Capitalization <input type="radio"/> Noun-Verb Agreement <input type="radio"/> Pronoun Use <input type="radio"/> Word Order <input type="radio"/> Custom: Make your own sentences.	My cat is pritty. I here singing. tom went to the store. They wants to play. Him likes ice cream. He kind is.
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



Sample sentences are shown in red.

Next, you will see the sentences for the category you chose. The sentences in black will be displayed to the learner to correct. Each sentence contains at least one error. The correct sentences appear in red and are the models to which the learner's sentences will be compared.



Pronouns

Use these sentences as is or edit it them to suit your needs.

Text: Him likes ice cream.

Answer:

Text: Be kind to she.

Answer:

Text: Us will read a book.


Answer:

Text: Jane likes to walk him dog.

Answer:

Text: Her and me made a cake.

Answer:




Save

Open

Clear

Print



You can edit any of these sentences to make them more appropriate for your learner. If you alter the error in the first sentence, be sure to correct the model to match. If you chose "Custom: Make your own sentences." at the first screen, you can enter any type or combination of spelling or grammatical errors for the learner to correct.

If you choose the custom sentences, they will appear in the text boxes until you choose a new learner or quit the program. To save the sentences for use with a different learner, or during another session, select the **Save** button. Select the **Open** button to retrieve a previously saved set of sentences.

Select the **Clear** button to erase the sentences from the screen. (You will not be erasing your saved file or the one permanently saved on the CD). Select the **Print** button to print this screen. Choose the **Settings** arrow to continue.

At the **Settings** screen, you can:

- choose the level of presentation and feedback for this activity. At Level One, each letter is spoken as it is typed. At Level Two, each word is spoken after a space or period is typed. At any time, the learner can select a **Speak** button to hear the incorrect sentence at the top of the screen, or the sentence she is typing.
- choose whether you want the sentences to be presented in a random order or in the order in which they appear in the editing screen.
- choose whether the learner will use the onscreen keyboard (if the input method is set to Mouse and Keyboard).
- select a different readback voice, if desired.
- select the **Sample** box if you wish to change text font, size, style, or color.

Once you have made these adjustments, you can invite the learner to join you at the screen with instructions. Here, a sample set of sentences orients the learner to the task.

Pronouns

Instructions and Orientation for the Learner

Each sentence has at least one mistake.
First, find any mistakes in the sentence.
Then, type the sentence with the mistake fixed.
Click on the "Done" button or press <Return> to check your answer.
Use this button to hear either sentence repeated at any time.

Example:

Sentence with mistakes: Her drives the car.

Correct sentence: She drives the car.

Begin Activity

The learner has three opportunities to type the sentence correctly before it is shown to her. To be correct, all capitalization, spaces and punctuation must match the correct version of the sentence. That is why, if you make your own sentences, you must be sure to provide the correct model.

The learner may find it valuable to listen to the target sentence to help her identify the error. She can also listen to her own sentence as she corrects the errors in the target sentence.

Writing Sentences

The **Writing Sentences** activity looks similar to the **Spelling & Grammar** activity, but is unstructured. The learner can write any sentence she wants, or be guided by the evaluator's instructions. The learner's sentence is not checked for accuracy because there is no one correct answer. Refer to Question 8 on the Observation Form for this activity to record comments about the learner's writing.

At the opening screen, you can type five sentences, phrases or words, depending on the type of activity you wish to construct for the learner (see ideas below).

Enter the text that you want the learner to see in the first text box for each sentence. Use the second text box for each sentence to enter an alternate phonetic spelling for the text, if

needed. This is what the learner will hear if she selects the **Speak** button. To preview a sentence or phonetic spelling, place your cursor in the text box containing the sentence and select the **Speak** button.

At the Settings screen choose a level to specify whether the sentence is presented to the learner on the screen and what type of speech readback (letter or word) is used in the activity. At Level 1 the learner sees and copies the sentence with letter feedback, while Level 2 offers word feedback. At Level 3 the learner will hear the sentence and write it without seeing it.

Some sentence ideas for this activity include:

- Sentences using vocabulary or spelling words.
- Lines from favorite rhymes or songs.
- Song or book titles.
- Sentences featuring punctuation marks.

Other activity ideas:

- You start a sentence—the learner completes it.
- You type a topic or theme—the learner writes a sentence about it.
- You type the name of person—the learner writes a sentence about that person.
- You write the first line of a poem—the learner writes a second, rhyming line.
- You write a sentence with a word missing—the learner types the missing word.

This free-form activity will give you a good indication as to whether the learner is ready to combine several sentences into a story. If so, she can move to **Making Stories**, the final Stage Seven activity.

Do not discourage invented spelling which can help a learner develop phonemic awareness. For further discussion of this topic, refer to page 6.

Making Stories



This activity gives the learner an opportunity to write a story. We have the chance to look at the learner's use of invented spelling, grammatical construction and meaning by examining the report from this activity. Does the story have a beginning, middle, and end? Does the writing tell a story that makes sense? Is the learner independently writing words and sentences that form complete thoughts that can be understood by a reader? The **Making Stories** activity tells so much about the learner's most sophisticated use of language in both a functional and academic manner.

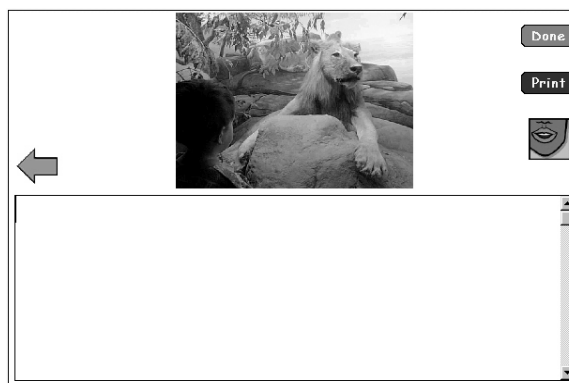
At the first screen, select a writing environment suited to the learner. Choose a readback setting based on the level at which the learner was most successful in the **Copying Words** activity. For example, if the learner did the best at Level 1, where feedback was letter-by-letter, check the 'Speak letters' box in the settings screen in this activity.

Select the text options that are most appropriate for the learner by clicking the Sample box.

The learner can choose a photograph provided by the program to generate a story theme. There are several pictures in each of four categories: Animals, Holidays, Toys and Sports. If the learner is especially motivated by or interested in other topics, place images that relate to these interests near the computer monitor. If a learner writes about a topic of interest, she is more likely to write independently.



If you want to use a digitized photo of your own, click the Open my own picture button. On the Macintosh, you can select any PICT, BMP, GIF or JPG image. On a Windows machine, you can select a BMP, JPG or GIF image; you may need to change the type of image in the drop-down menu labeled "Files of type:" to locate the picture you want to use.



The picture will be displayed next to a text box where the learner can type. She can use the **Speak** button to hear what she has typed. The **Print** button prints a screenshot of the photo and all of the story that is visible in the text box. If the learner's story is long, either print the **Making Stories** report or save the report as a .txt file and print it later. The **Done** button brings her to a screen that asks if she has finished her story. If she selects 'yes' she will leave the activity. If she selects 'no' she will return to her story.

Choose the left arrow if you want to change any settings. To return to the story in progress choose the **Story** button that will appear on the "Choose a topic" screen. If the learner is using the onscreen keyboard, a thumbnail of the picture will appear in the left corner of the screen. The learner can see a large version of the picture by selecting the **Big Picture** key on the bottom row of the onscreen keyboard. The evaluator can move the window containing the large image on the screen, if desired, by dragging its title bar. Close the picture by clicking its close box or selecting the **Close Picture** key on the onscreen keyboard.

If the learner has a difficult time getting started, coach her to generate ideas. Ask questions such as “What do you think is happening in this picture?” A story starter is another support you can employ. You can also help her by typing part of the first sentence yourself. Try these starters:

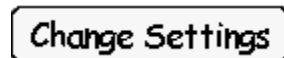
Once upon a time...
One day....

We went to...
This animal is....

Setting and Changing Preferences

There are many preference settings you can change that affect all the activities. These preferences are also printed on the reports or included in the saved reports to serve as a record of the settings used during the session.

When you are choosing an activity, some of the current preference settings are displayed at the bottom of the screen. When you change settings, the information in this display is updated. The settings most recently saved are in effect when you start Stage Seven.



To modify preferences, click the Change Settings button. The Preferences options are shown below. The following descriptions will help you choose settings. To make or change a setting, click the radio button for the item.

Stage Seven Preferences

Select an input method to set or change options:

☐ **Mouse and Keyboard**
Including standard IntelliKeys overlays

☐ **Touchscreen**

☒ **Auto Scan**
switch

☐ **Step Scan** keyboard, IntelliKeys, 2 switches

☐ **Pointer**
with dwell

Select other options:

Input Method

Click the radio button for the input method the learner will be using to make or change settings. Options for the input method will appear in the lower half of the screen.

☒ **Mouse and Keyboard**

Mouse and Keyboard is the initial setting. Choose this setting if you are using a mouse and keyboard. When using the mouse, move the cursor to the object, then click the mouse button. The action occurs when you press down on the button. You can always type on a keyboard, regardless of the input method that you have selected. You can also choose this setting if you are using a head pointing system with a click option.

IntelliKeys keyboard

You should choose the Mouse and Keyboard setting if you are using an IntelliKeys keyboard. If Stage Seven detects that an IntelliKeys is attached, it will automatically load the correct overlay: Level 1, 2 or 3 overlay for the **Building Sentences** activity, and Stage Seven Explore overlay for the **Rhyming** and **High Frequency Words** divergent activities. For the other activities that involve typing activities, use a standard IntelliKeys overlay that offers numbers and letters. For information on using and printing the overlays, refer to the ReadMe file for Stage Seven in the IntelliKeys folder on the Stages CD.

☐ **Touchscreen**

Choose **Touchscreen** if you are using a built-in touchscreen or a touchscreen device that you attach to the monitor. You can choose whether to have the action occur when the learner presses down on an object (Touch Down) or when the touch is released (Touch Up, the standard setting).

☐ **Auto Scan**

Choose **Auto Scan** to use a switch that is set to emulate a mouseclick. The switch mode is autoscan or linear scanning. Each object on the screen highlights one at a time, in order. Press the switch to activate the highlighted object. If you wish to step scan with two switches, choose the Step Scan input method and refer to the instructions on page 37.

Setting the scan rate

At the bottom of the screen, you can change the scan rate, which is the length of time that each object highlights.

Choose from:

- ☐ **Slow (3 seconds)**
- ☒ **Medium (2 seconds)**
- ☐ **Fast (1 second)**

You can also enter a different number of seconds (from .5 to 10) in the text box on the right side of the screen.

Using scanning

Press the switch to start scanning in the activities. Each object will highlight, one by one. Press the switch again to select the object that is highlighted. You can pause scanning by pressing the <esc> key or by waiting for three cycles through all objects to be completed. When scanning is paused, you can use the mouse to exit the activity. Press the switch or click the mouse button to resume scanning.

Using a Discover:Switch

If you are using a Discover: Switch™ (Madentec, Inc.), you will be prompted to select a setup the first time you use the Stages activities. This prompt occurs two times: once for the application that launches Stages, and once for the actual Stages application. For both, choose the setup named “Click Only Single Switch” (Macintosh) or “Click Only Single Switch.sus (Windows). You will hear a beep when the Discover:Switch activates. For best results, choose a slow scan rate.

Using the Crick USB Switch Interface

Please refer to the Q&A section of this binder for information on using this switch interface box.

Autoscanning using a switch with IntelliKeys

Choose the Auto Scan input method if you want to autoscan using a switch connected to IntelliKeys, or press IntelliKeys as if it were a switch.

Click the check box shown below to ensure that this information is included in the report.

☒ The switch is connected to IntelliKeys or the learner is using IntelliKeys as a switch.

The Stages Autoscan overlay, which sends a mouse-click, will automatically load. With Windows, you must turn on Num Lock and check the “Use MouseKeys” option in the Accessibility Options Control Panel.

● **Step scan**

Choose **Step Scan** if you are using a regular or alternative keyboard or two switches to step scan. Specify which input device you are using so that it will be reported correctly.

- ☐ **IntelliKeys keyboard**
- ☒ **Standard keyboard**
- ☐ **2 switches**

The Stage Seven software automatically loads the Stages Stepscan overlay if it detects that IntelliKeys is attached. Follow the directions on the Stages CD to print a copy of the overlay. (Refer to Stage 7 Read Me file in the Read Me folder in the Overlays folder on the Stages CD.)



- Press the right arrow on the overlay, switch 1 or <Tab> to step forward from object to object.
- Press the left arrow on the overlay, or <Backspace> or <Delete> to step backward from object to object.
- Press the target in the middle of the overlay, switch 2 or <Return> or <Enter> to select the highlighted object.

● **Pointer** (with dwell)

Choose **Pointer (with dwell)** if you are using a head pointing system or other pointing device (such as a joystick or trackball) that does not provide a means of clicking. Instead, aim the pointer at a highlighted object for a period of time to select it.

When the pointer highlights an object, a dwell period begins. An animated “counting fingers” cursor shows the dwell elapsing. When the dwell period is over, the highlighted object is selected. To select a highlighted object again, move the pointer away from it, then back to it.

Setting the dwell time

At the bottom of the screen, you can change the dwell time, the length of the dwell time before a highlighted object is selected. Choose from:

- ☐ Long dwell (3 seconds)
- ☒ Medium dwell (2 seconds)
- ☐ Short dwell (1 second)

You can also enter a different number of seconds (from .5 to 10) in the text box on the right side of the screen.

To cancel a dwell in progress, move the pointer to the background or to another target.

Other Options

Click the buttons for other settings you want to adjust. Options for these settings will appear in the lower half of the screen.

Text Settings

Use the Text Settings option to customize text settings for individual learners. See page 38 for more information on these settings.

abcde ABCDE

Text Font:
☒ plain
☐ classroom
☐ Roman

Text Color:
☐ red ☐ white ☐ magenta ☐ yellow
☒ black ☐ green ☐ blue

Text Style:
☐ bold

Text Size:
☒ small - 24 pt
☐ medium - 36 pt
☐ large - 48 pt
☐ xtra large - 60 pt
☐ jumbo - 72 pt

background

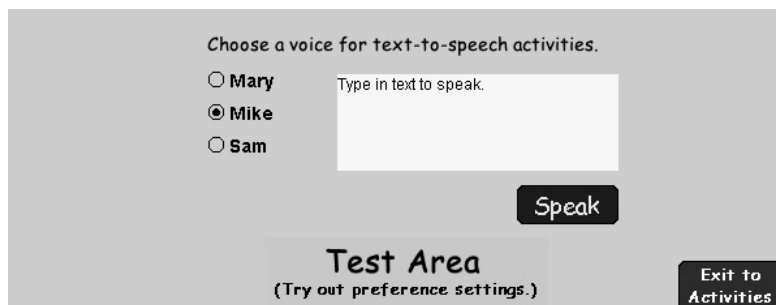
Return to Preferences

Note that some of the activities do not use all of the settings available on this screen. Settings that you make here, however, will be remembered for activities that use them.

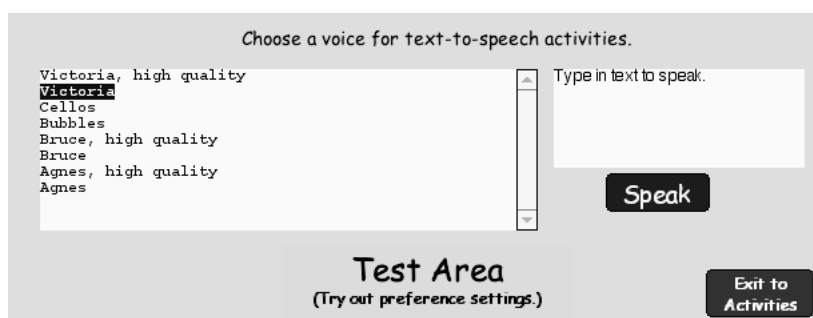
Voice

Choose the type of voice that the learner will hear during the Stage Seven activities. Type in a sample message, and select the **Speak** button to hear the voice.

If you are running a Windows computer and installed the voices provided with Stage Seven, you will see this screen:



If you are using a Macintosh computer or a PC with a different set of voices installed, you will see a screen similar to the one shown below.



Reward

A reward occurs after correct answers in the Assess activities. You can choose Child or Teen/Adult oriented rewards.



☐ Child



☒ Teen/Adult

Highlight

You can choose the color and thickness of the highlight border. Select a border size of 1, 4, or 7 pixels (screen dots), no border (0 pixels), or enter a custom size from 1 to 14 pixels. The initial setting is 4 pixels.

Select a color: red, white, magenta, yellow, black, cyan, green, or blue. The Sample Border box will show the effects of changing the size or the color. The initial setting is red.

Sound

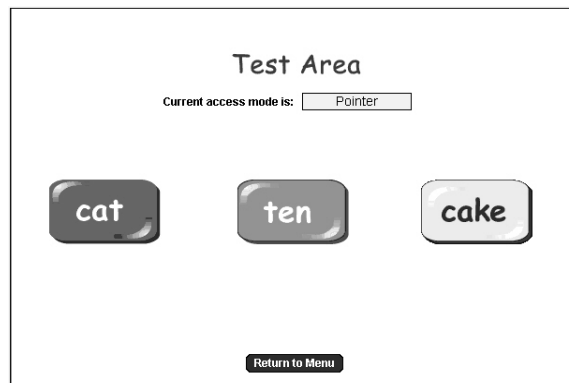
You can choose whether you want to hear a sound when objects are highlighted either by scanning or by moving the mouse pointer to an object. The initial setting is No Sound.

- ☐ Sound
- ☒ No Sound

Move the mouse over the note graphic to hear the highlight sound.

Test Area (Try out preference settings.)

Click the Test Area button to try your preference settings.



Exit to Activities

When you are done setting preferences, click the Exit to Activities button to return to your last screen.

Viewing and Using the Reports

The reports help you watch for improvement over time.

At the end of each activity, you can see a report of the learner's session. You can look for a learner's improvement over time by administering the activities again and reviewing the resulting reports.

The report is automatically generated using information about the settings used and data gathered about the learner's performance. At the top of the report is information based on the general settings. The bottom portion of the report displays specific data that was gathered during the session. You can store data on the text settings in use during an activity (text font, size, color, etc.) by saving the report and examining it as a .txt file (see page 42 for more information).

Learner's Name:

This is the name that you entered when you started the activities. You can edit the name on this report now by clicking in the name text box and changing the name.

Input Method:

This is the access method that you selected in the Preference Settings screen. If you did not change this setting, the default value of Mouse is displayed. If the input method is Auto Scan or Pointer, the scan rate or dwell time is also displayed.

Date and Time:

The date and time that the report was generated is displayed at the bottom of the screen. If this information is not correct, check the setting of your computer's clock.

Time:

How long did the learner spend on the activity? The timer starts when the first screen for the activity opens and ends when the last screen of the activity closes. The duration is displayed in minutes and seconds. Example: 1:06 = 1 minute and 6 seconds.

Tries

In Assess activities, how many attempts did the learner make to type the correct word? If the learner is correct on the first try, the number in the Tries column will show you that only 1 attempt was made. If a 2 appears under Tries, the learner was correct on the second try. A 3 indicates that the learner

was not able to find the correct answer; rather, the computer presented the information to the learner.

Correct?

Did learner respond correctly to the question? (Yes or No.)

Printing the Report



Click the Print button or choose Print from the File menu to print the report screen. You can also use the keyboard command for your computer:

Macintosh: ⌘P
Windows: Ctrl-P

Saving the Report



To save the report, click the Save button or use the keyboard command for your computer:

Macintosh: ⌘S
Windows: Ctrl-S

In addition to the information on the report screen, you will also be saving the text settings used in the activity.

**STAGES REPORT
WIZARD
automatically
graphs the data
saved in your
reports.**

A dialog box appears with a file name that describes the content of the report. The word Report will help you differentiate your report files from word or sentence lists you may save in the same location. You can change the name of the report if you prefer. On a Windows computer, it is important to keep the ".txt" extension at the end of the file name so that it will be recognized as a WordPad document. If a file with the same name already exists in the folder, you can either replace it with the contents of the new file or choose a different file name.

The first time during each session that you save a report, a default file location is used. On a Windows computer, this location is the "C:\My Documents" folder. (If this folder does not exist, the Desktop is used instead.) On the Macintosh, the default location is usually the main folder of the hard drive. (If the location is the CD and not the hard drive, refer to Q&A section of this binder for instructions on how to change this.)

You can browse to select a different folder for your reports or create a new folder. Future reports that you save during the same session will use the previously selected save location. If you are using Stages Report Wizard, save each learner's reports to his or her folder in the My Stages Reports folder.

For information on importing the saved report files into other applications, refer to the Q&A section of this binder.

Finishing the Report



After viewing and printing the report, click the Done button at the bottom of the screen. You can then:

- change to a different learner;
- change to a different activity or change settings;
- return to the report to print or save;
- quit the program.

Stage Seven Menus (and exiting Stage Seven)

Stage Seven offers several menu options. Select an item from the menu or use its keystroke equivalent, listed below.

Open Onscreen Keyboard: This menu item appears only when Stage Seven is run on a Mercury or MiniMerc computer (Assistive Technology, Inc.). Choose this option when you need to type and an external keyboard is not available.

Start Over: Return to the opening screen. You will lose any data that has been collected for the learner.

Save: Save the current report information to a file (see page 42). This option is available only in the report.

Macintosh: ⌘S Windows: Ctrl-S

Print: Print the current screen.

Macintosh: ⌘P Windows: Ctrl-P

Choose a New Stage: (All-in-One Stages CD only)

Return to the main Stages menu. (You can also select the Exit Stage Seven button at the end of the report.)

Macintosh: ⌘N Windows: Ctrl-N

Quit: (Stage Seven CD only)

Exit Stage Seven. (You can also select the Exit Stage Seven button at the end of the report.)

Macintosh: ⌘Q Windows: Ctrl-Q

Presenting the Activities

Now that you have explored the activities on your own, you are ready to use them with a learner. It is important to use the assessment activities as intended and also to set up an appropriate environment for the learner. The activities are not designed for everyday practice, but to help you measure progress within each Stage of development. Use the activities to help determine exactly which skills require more practice through the use of third-party software. This section will help you and your learner get the most out of the assessment activities.

When and How to Use the Assessment Activities

Stage Seven activities help you observe a learner's ability to write independently. Use the activities to determine the specific skills she needs to hone. For example, can she write a word independently, but then need help writing a complete sentence? It is critical to solidify these skills before expecting a learner to write independently and successfully. Stage Seven can help you determine the degree of support a learner needs when writing, as well as the features she needs in a software writing tool.

The Stages philosophy advocates a competency-based observation approach to assessment. Knowing exactly what a learner can do provides an opportunity to design a custom curriculum tailored for her.

Use the accompanying Observation Form, along with performance reports printed from within each activity, to form a foundation for generating an informal competency-based assessment report. As the learner uses the activities, make observations on the forms that have been developed to address this Stage. Use the onscreen and saved reports as well as written notes made on the Observation Form provided on page 59. Add your own category of observation on the form under "Additional Observations."

Use these results to determine which skill areas the learner needs to practice, and what features she needs in software that will support her independent writing. Then put the

Stages activities away while the learner works in a practice environment of appropriate software from many manufacturers, which are recommended for Stage Seven.

Work alternately with Stage Seven assessment activities for assessment and the third party software for practice. Keep a portfolio of the observation results as well as any visual documentation available (photos or video). You can also keep any printouts that might be available from the practice software to document steps toward achievement.

Preparing the Environment

The environment for evaluating a learner's functioning stage should be a familiar one. It should be the place where she typically works, lives, and plays. Unfamiliar environments are a curiosity—a learner will attend to the details around her that are different more than she will attend to the activity we want her to use. We want to avoid as many new variables as we can, helping the learner feel the comfort of the cognitively familiar environment. When the assessment activity is introduced, she can then concentrate on the new behavior or content rather than on environmental distracters.

Because the Stages philosophy is sensitive to multiple facets of the learning process, consider the physical comfort of the learner. Make sure that the assistive technology team gives input to the access device selection and proper positioning of the learner in the physical environment. Be sure the learner's environment is optimal for success.

- Can the learner see the screen without glare or visual strain?
- Is the volume of sound from the computer adjusted to a comfortable level?
- Is the learner seated at the computer properly?
- Is the access device stable and in a position for consistently reliable use?
- Have the computer control panels been adjusted to maximize learner performance?
- When was the learner's last meal or snack? Does she have the proper fuel to work?
- Have necessary medications been administered properly?

In short, consider every aspect of the learner's physical comfort to be confident that a solid learning environment is available for optimum learner performance.

Adult Role in the Observation Process

The learner will be making choices during these assessment activities. It is important that the work be that of the learner, not of the adult(s) or other learners in the environment. Give encouragement, but do not give the answers to the questions. Support the learner by urging her to respond and praising her attention to the tasks. Take care not to prompt the learner unnecessarily.

Try a sample activity, assisting with physical movement to help orient the learner. For example, it's fine to guide the learner's actions by providing a physical prompt while entering text for one sample activity. Then encourage the learner to try more activities on her own as you slip into a more passive role.

In addition to physical comfort, consider the emotional side of a Stage Seven learner during the assessment process. Writing is part of traditional school curriculum, and can be a daunting challenge. Consider the learner's self-esteem as she ventures toward independent efforts. Try to keep her surroundings as routine as possible so that she does not feel pressured to perform differently than she might during other activities.

Consider the impact of a learner's environment on her success. If she normally uses a manipulative object, such as an electronic spell checker, a word wall or a personal word list, it is acceptable to have those items available in the assessment setting. This will permit an opportunity to see if the learner can apply the use of these tools to respond to the assessment activities.

Sample Verbal Prompts and Feedback

In Stage Seven, the learner has more sophisticated work to do than in earlier Stages. The content is more demanding. Encourage the learner verbally, because feedback helps reinforce skills, and keeps the learner

focused on her task. However, allow for adequate response time before prompting the learner yourself.

Stage Seven activities are challenging because tasks such as writing sentences require self-motivation and self-expression. Activities in earlier Stages are presented in traditional question-and-answer format. Choose preference settings carefully to accommodate this different learning environment.

A Stage Seven learner generally knows when she has made a mistake. Encourage her if this should happen. Here are some prompts to consider:

When the learner makes a mistake:

- That can be so confusing.
- Sometimes I get mixed up too.
- That's OK, keep working. You are doing great!
- What sound do you hear in that word?
- What sound comes first? What letter goes with that sound?
- Uh, oh! (lightheartedly)

When the learner is successful:

- You are right, hooray!
- Way to go, (use learner's name)!
- You are really watching those letters/words carefully!
- Awesome! or Excellent! (or other contemporary expression)
- Fantastic!
- How did you get so smart?

Helping the learner think through the task:

- The word you need to write is (repeat word).
- What letters do you hear in (repeat word)?
- I'm so proud of you, (use learner's name).
- Say the word with me.

Building Sentences—Level 1

- Start your sentence with a word on the yellow part.
- Find a word on the pink part.
- Listen to what you have made so far any time you like.
- Try a word on the blue part.
- End your sentence with a period.
- Listen to your sentence. Do you like the way it sounds?

Building Sentences—Levels 2 and 3

- Listen to what you have made so far any time you like.
- Listen to your sentence. Do you like the way it sounds?

Spelling & Grammar

- Do you see a mistake in the sentence?
- Choose the **Speak** button to listen to the first sentence. Do you hear a mistake?
- Listen to the sentence you wrote. Does it sound right?
- Look at both sentences carefully.

Writing Sentences

In this unstructured activity, the prompts you use will depend on the text you type and your instructions to the learner.

Making Stories

- What do you think is happening in this picture?
- Does this animal have a name?
- What are these people doing?
- Is this a special occasion? How do you know?

Keeping the learner on task:

- This is fun! Let's do more.
- I can't believe how hard you are working. Keep it up.
- I'm so proud of you, (use learner's name).
- Keep on working, you can do it.
- Great work! Keep it up.
- I can't wait to read what you write!
- Let's print this out for your folder.

While it is important to encourage the learner and praise attention to both her behavior and the content, it is even more important not to interfere with the learner's performance. If she doesn't know how to write a word, let that happen. The information gathered will help you identify areas for further study. It is important that the work be that of the learner, not of the encouraging and well-meaning adult.

Observing the Learner

Making Observations

The learner should be familiar with the teacher or therapist who will work with her on the Stages activities. The teacher or therapist may gain tremendous insight about how the learner thinks and where her abilities break down during the assessment activities.

Generally, the learner should not see you recording her performance. It's ideal if another adult who is commonly in the learning environment can record the observations. One adult can encourage the learner and the other can record behaviors during the assessment activity without being noticed by the learner. Also, in this Stage you will gather some data post-test when you review the printed or saved files to edit the learner's spelling and grammar.

The accuracy of the data collected during the session is validated when two adults in the same environment observe the same behaviors. Finally, an ideal environment would include an unobtrusive video or still camera. Documenting a learner's performance allows the IEP team to observe results as part of the reporting and assessment process.

Is the learner properly positioned in the learning environment? Is the learner comfortable? Only if you are confident that the environmental conditions are conducive for evaluation can the results be considered.

Interpreting Observation Results

Work with another observer and use the Observation Form to record learner behavior during the activities. Watch for the behaviors identified on the forms; add your own under "Additional Observations."

Carefully setting the stage for the assessment will benefit the two components that comprise the total evaluation. While the computer collects the learner's work, performance data, and preference settings used during the activities, the

observer(s) present can focus on documenting information on affect, behavior and personal impressions on the Observation Form.

Observation Form Questions

The first page allows you to record general information about the assessment environment.

Question 1 asks you to observe whether the learner used an access device that was appropriate for entering letter keys for writing. If so, note whether she was able to use the access device successfully.

Question 2 asks you to observe the learner as she works toward writing words independently. Was any coaching needed? If so, indicate that on the Observation Form. Did the learner use any manipulative tools like the word wall or a personal word list? Did she ask to use a hand-held spelling tool? If so, this may indicate that she understands how to use these tools appropriately.

Question 3 asks you to observe the learner's approach to writing high-frequency words. Observe the learner's use of word walls or other manipulative tools during this activity. Was any coaching necessary? If so, indicate that on the Observation Form.

Question 4 asks you to observe the learner's ability to complete a rhyme correctly. If the learner can do this, it indicates that she understands how the onset and other sounds in a word relate to each other. The first four pairs of rhyming words are spelled identically from the vowel sound to the end of the word. The learner changes the initial consonant to create another rhyming word. Did she enter an incorrect consonant, but come close to the correct spelling? This may indicate that she has more work to do in this area. The last two pairs of words end with different ending letter patterns that make the same sound. Did the learner hear the sound and recognize alternate ways to spell the rhyming words? Did she spell a rhyming word correctly that uses a different spelling pattern? This may indicate that she has mastered a higher level phonetic skill.

Question 5 asks you to observe Level 1 in the Building Sentences activity. Did the learner use color and shape cues to compose her sentence correctly? If so, this indicates that she uses cues to make grammatical construction decisions. If the learner is not yet able to use these cues, this indicates that she is not quite ready for Level 2 or 3 of this activity.

Question 6 asks you to observe Levels 2 and 3 in the Building Sentences activity. Does the learner review all of the words before beginning? Does she seem to have a plan for the sentence she is going to write? Does she write the sentence as she goes along rather than planning ahead? If the learner plans her sentence before selecting any words, this is an indication that she is ready for more sophisticated writing projects. If the learner can build a sentence that makes sense as she goes along, this is also an indication that she is ready for more sophisticated writing efforts. Does the sentence make sense the first time it is written? Does the learner self-correct using the **Speak** button? If so, this indicates that she could make good use of the word-by-word readback option in word processing software. If the learner cannot create a correct sentence that makes sense at this level, she needs to do more work in this area using the recommended practice software.

Question 7 asks you to observe the learner's ability to identify and correct spelling and grammatical errors. Can she spot the errors visually, or did she need to use the **Speak** button to hear the errors in the sentences? Perhaps she could spot the error, but was then unable to find a correct solution to fixing it. If the learner cannot correct these spelling and grammar mistakes, or if she needed a lot of coaching, she needs to do more work in this area using the recommended practice software.

Question 8 asks you to observe the learner's ability to write sentences independently. Since this activity is unstructured, it is up to the evaluator to assess whether the learner followed the instructions provided and responded appropriately. Look for correct spelling and grammatical construction and whether the writing accurately reflects the instructions. Did she use a tool such as an electronic spell checker to support her writing? If the learner needs help in spelling and grammar, she can spend time using the recommended practice

software. If the learner can write easily, she can move to the **Making Stories** activity and also begin to use word processing programs that are appropriate for her. Refer to the software chart following page 73 for details about Talking Writing Software and Writing Tools programs that might be beneficial to the learner.

Question 9 asks you to observe the learner's ability to write a story independently. Does she seem to plan the story? If so, this indicates that she understands how to get started with independent writing. Is one picture particularly interesting to her? Why? If one topic is more successful than another, use this information to plan further writing exercises. Did the learner need help choosing a topic? Did you use any of the prompts or coaching suggestions mentioned on pages 48–49? Is there a story starter? If so, note which one helped her the most to write independently. Was there a beginning, middle and end to the story? If so, this indicates that the learner has a sense of how stories work, and that reading and writing comprehension skills are developing. If not, more work in both reading and writing parts of stories is needed.

Question 10 asks you to observe the learner's ability to use written language conventions. Did she use invented spelling? Can you tell what word she intended to write? If so, this indicates that the learner is developing a strong sense of phonetic awareness and that progress is being made in both reading and writing skills. Did she use acceptable grammar, syntax and word usage? Can you tell what content is intended? Did she use a tool such as an electronic spell checker to support her writing?

Interpreting Report Data

The Stage Seven activities and the reports that they generate capture the text that the learner writes. Because some of the assessment environments can be edited to reflect specific skill areas for specific students, in a sense it is not possible to identify a skill achievement level on reports. It is up to the observer to interpret this text and look for the target skills that the learner has been taught. For example, in the **Making Stories** activity, the report does not give feedback on written language conventions. The teacher needs to look at the story

printout and mark it after the learner leaves the assessment environment.

Therefore, how should the work be graded or marked for accuracy? Consider such written language skills areas as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word use or syntax. For each learner the expectations for written language use will be different. If these are areas in which the learner has been working, and classroom instruction has already addressed them, by all means consider these as you mark the story printout that will be included in the learner's portfolio. If these areas have not yet been addressed, or if the story printout indicates that work is needed in specific written language areas, there is software that can be used for day-to-day practice in support of this learning.

Here's another example of how the Stages in this framework work together. Language arts and reading software recommended in Stage Five certainly can be used as practice or study environments for addressing Stage Seven written language skills. Software used for spelling practice at Stage Five can also be used for spelling practice to develop Stage Seven skills. Skill areas of particular importance are vocabulary development or enrichment, spelling, grammar, syntax and punctuation. All of these skill areas are factors that influence a learner's ability to develop sophisticated writing skills.

In short, educational experts believe reading and writing are parallel skills. Marilyn Adams (1998) says "Research indicates that children's achievements in reading and writing are generally quite strongly and positively related. Further, across evaluations of beginning reading programs, emphasis on writing activities is repeatedly shown to result in special gains in reading achievement." Stage Five language arts and reading software is therefore very appropriate for practicing Stage Seven written language skills.

Stage Seven investigates the highest level of independence in the learning process. Writing must be independent if it is to be the learner's own work. Continue using Stage Seven assessment activities while determining the best attributes for custom settings offered in the various word processing environments.

Making Words: Copying Words

Two columns of words appear on the report: one for target words, labeled 'Teacher Word' on the report, and another for the actual words the learner writes, 'Learner Word.' Note at which level the word is written correctly. Next, look to see how much support the learner needs to be successful. If the learner writes target words at Level Three, she has mastered the ability to write those words without support. When she is independently writing single words beyond the personal level, she is showing that she is ready for the next step. This activity serves as an ongoing indicator of the learner's ability to write words independently. Use it as frequently as necessary if this skill requires assessment. As key vocabulary words are introduced into a learner's world, use this activity to evaluate her ability to write those words.

Making Words: Typing High-Frequency Words

We already know and understand the importance of these 10 high-frequency words to a learner's ability to write independently. Two columns of words appear on the report: the target words and the actual words the learner writes. Be sure the learner writes each word carefully. Keep moving back and forth between Stage Seven Explore and Assess activities until the learner knows all ten words.

Making Words: Building Rhymes

The report lists the missing words in each rhyme in a column on the left. The learner's words appear in three columns on the right. If the learner did not type the correct words on the first try, her answers on the second and, if necessary, third try, appear in the last two columns.

Making Sentences: Building Sentences

The report includes the learner's sentences organized by Grade levels (1, 2 or 3). If the learner has worked on more than one level during a session, results from each level will appear on the report. The report also indicates the number of words at each grade level the learner selected.

Making Sentences: Spelling & Grammar

The report includes the incorrect sentence and the learner's sentence (after three attempts). The report indicates if the learner was able to type it correctly and the number of tries needed.

Making Sentences: Writing Sentences

The report shows the sentence entered by the evaluator, and the text typed by the learner. There is no correct answer in this activity. It is left up to the evaluator to interpret the results based on the skills and experience of the learner.

Making Stories

The report contains the learner's story. Compare the stories she writes to see if there are differences in the accuracy of the words and/or the story length.

After the learner writes a story using spoken letter or word readback, have her write another story with no speech readback available. Which draft of the story is best? Under which conditions does she spell most accurately? Under which conditions does she write stories that relate accurately to the picture?

Or, set the program for 'Speak letters' when the learner begins writing her story. Before she begins her next story, turn off that setting and turn on the 'Speak words' (word-only read back) feature. When 'Speak words' is chosen, the word is spoken when the learner types a <space> after it.

A learner's use of grammar depends on her experience. If you will be considering her grammar, punctuation and spelling skills, use Question 10 on the Observation Form that starts on page 59 to guide your evaluation of this activity.

Observation Form—Stage Seven

Learner's Name _____

Recorder's Name _____

Other Observer's Name _____

Date _____

Setting for Observation _____

Using informal observation techniques, record the following information so that you can accurately interpret learner performance.

Assessment Environment:

View the screen on the same eye level as the learner. Is there a glare on the screen?

_____ Yes _____ No

(If so, adjust window blinds, reposition the computer and learner's seat, or construct a shade for the monitor to eliminate the glare.)

Describe the setting:

_____ learner's regular setting _____ familiar but not everyday _____ unfamiliar

Position the learner is facing:

_____ toward the center of the room
_____ away from the center of the room

Are there any distracting objects nearby? _____ Yes _____ No

Is the learner properly positioned? _____ Yes _____ No

Should these or any other factors be considered when interpreting results?

Copy these pages before recording your observations.

(This form is also provided as a PDF on the Stages CD.)

(over)

1. Did the learner use an access device that was appropriate for entering letter keys for writing? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Was the learner able to use it successfully? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Comment: _____

2. *Making Words—Copying Words*

Did the learner use any sort of manipulative tool to support her writing? Flash Card? Word Wall? Personal word list? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, did the learner know how to apply the tool properly? Did she use it without help? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the learner require coaching? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, how? Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 of the Stage Seven User’s Guide necessary for her success? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comment: _____

3. *Making Words—Typing High-Frequency Words*

Did the learner use any sort of manipulative tool to support her writing? Flash Card? Word Wall? Personal word list? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, did the learner know how to apply the tool properly? Did she use it without help? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the learner require coaching? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, how? Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 necessary for her success? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comment: _____

4. *Making Words—Building Rhymes*

Did the learner write a word that rhymes but isn't the target word?

____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner invent a spelling for the target word? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner write a word that rhymes, but is misspelled? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how? _____

Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 necessary for her success?

____ Yes ____ No

Comment: _____

5. *Making Sentences—Building Sentences (Level One)*

In the Level One activity, did the learner seem to notice the color or shape cues on the word wall? ____ Yes ____ No

Did she use the cues to guide her selection? ____ Yes ____ No

Did she remember to add a period at the end of her sentence?

____ Yes ____ No

Does the sentence make sense? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how? _____

Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 necessary for her success?

____ Yes ____ No

Comment: _____

6. *Making Sentences—Building Sentences (Levels Two and Three)*

In the Level Two and Level Three activities, did the learner seem to plan her sentence, or did she randomly select words? _____

How did the learner self-correct? _____

Did the learner remember to add a period at the end of her sentence?

____ Yes ____ No

Does the sentence make sense? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how?

Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 necessary for her success?

____ Yes ____ No

Comment: _____

7. *Making Sentences—Spelling & Grammar*

Did the learner find the errors quickly? ____ Yes ____ No

Was the learner able to correct the errors easily? ____ Yes ____ No

Did she identify the error but not know how to correct it? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use the Speak buttons to help identify the errors?
____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how?

Did the learner correct the sentence in a way that differed from the target answer?
____ Yes ____ No

Comment: _____

8. *Making Sentences—Writing Sentences (unstructured)*

Was the learner able to understand your instructions? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use invented spelling? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use acceptable grammar? ____ Yes ____ No

Can you tell what content is intended? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use proper punctuation? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use a tool such as a hand-held electronic spell-checker to support her writing? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how?

9. *Making Stories—Themes*

Did the learner seem to plan the story? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner have interest in one picture in particular? ____ Yes ____ No

Why? _____

Did the learner come up with an idea to write about by herself, or did she need help? _____

Was a story starter provided? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, write it here: _____

Does the story have a beginning, middle and end? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner require coaching? ____ Yes ____ No If so, how?

Were any of the prompts suggested on pages 48–49 necessary for her success?

____ Yes ____ No

Comment: _____

10. *Making Stories—Written Language Conventions*

Did the learner use invented spelling? ____ Yes ____ No

Can you tell which word is intended? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use acceptable grammar? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use acceptable syntax or word usage? ____ Yes ____ No

Did the learner use proper punctuation? ____ Yes ____ No

Remember to make notes about the learner's spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing content on the Stage Seven report printouts.

[illegible]

Stage Seven Observation Form

Practice Software for Stage Seven

General Software Considerations

Look for ways to adjust Stage Seven software for your learner.

It is important to note that many software programs suggested can be recommended at more than one Stage. These programs provide varied content and malleable preference settings that allow for custom presentations.

By making adjustments to such areas as input option or specific content for an activity, you can use the same software program successfully at several Stages. For example, many titles that address writing skills can be used in both Stages Five and Seven for different purposes. Be sure to review software previously purchased for use with writing strategies.

Stages recommends individual software titles because they are effective and valuable resources that help our target learners accomplish their developmental goals—not because they are the most dynamic or up-to-date. In fact, some recommended programs have been available for several years and may appear to be outdated. Often recycled or older computer equipment is what’s available for our target learners. As long as the software offers valuable activities and still may be found in schools or homes as of the publication date of this guide, it remains on the list.

Exploring Software Settings

Software that is appropriate for Stage Seven is available from many developers. These recommended programs are included in the Software Comparison Chart that follows. As you look to identify software that is appropriate for an individual learner, keep the following in mind.

Input modes

Software appropriate for use at Stage Seven requires a keyboard or keyboard emulator to enter text. A keyboard emulator is an adaptive device with software that provides the functions of a standard keyboard, but allows the learner to use an alternative access device such as a switch or joy-

stick to select text. Many keyboard emulators appear as onscreen keyboards and some have scanning built in. A menu of device options should be available in the software.

Another option for entering text is an alternative keyboard such as Intellikeys®. Alternative keyboards allow you to re-map a standard keyboard to customize the layout or appearance of the keys for the learner.

When examining input options in word processing software, there are two issues to consider. How will the learner access the menus to use the save and print functions? And how will the user enter text into the document? Take the time to carefully examine all access options. A switch user may need menus that scan and an onscreen keyboard to enter text. An IntelliKeys keyboard user may need customized overlays that have menu functions incorporated onto the same layout as the text characters on the keyboard.

Some access devices have preference settings that you can adjust to accommodate the learner's access environment. For example, the key repeat rate may be slowed down for users who have difficulty releasing their touch so that they will avoid entering multiple key characters. Work with the assistive technology team or specialist to determine the best way to configure the environment for success.

Adjusting settings for various types of learners

Explore settings that fit the learner's preferences and needs, but don't feel you need to try every available setting, as the learner may become confused or distracted. The focus is on getting the learner to write rather than testing or playing with menu options and settings.

Software recommended for practice at Stage Seven offers a range of ways to motivate a reluctant writer. Adding graphics, a sound effect or a video clip to a story can be just what the learner needs to remain interested and enthusiastic. After she has practiced writing for some time, consider teaching her how to use sophisticated writing tools such as a spell checker or word prediction software.

Balance expectations for your learner's progress by keeping the learning process simple and using a familiar tool. Avoid raising expectations on content until she is comfortable with her tools, and with the writing process. This way the learner can become more independent and incorporate more and more target vocabulary words. If she is using a new writing tool, focus on her mastery of the process, rather than on sophisticated content. Focus on the quality of her content once the process feels seamless to the learner.

The Stage Seven Charts

Because Stage Seven covers both writing and language arts skills, the software charts have been divided into two parts: Talking Word Processors and Writing Tools/Written Language and Syntax Development.

Talking Writing Software Chart

The first chart compares a range of word processing software with speech readback. Each title offers specific features that may be critical to a learner's success. Use this chart to help determine which writing software might be most beneficial to the learner.

The following terms are used in the chart.

Title	The name of the software program.
Publisher	The name of the company that produces or distributes the software.
Platform	<p>The types of computers that can run the software.</p> <p><i>Mac:</i> Macintosh® computers</p> <p><i>Win:</i> PC computers running the Windows® operating system</p> <p><i>DOS:</i> PC computers running the DOS operating system (older models)</p> <p><i>Apple II:</i> early computer from Apple® Computer, Inc.</p> <p>Software is available on CD-ROM, unless otherwise noted.</p> <p><i>Mac/Win:</i> This software is available for both platforms on the same CD.</p> <p><i>Mac, Win:</i> This software is available for both platforms, but may be packaged separately.</p>
Speech Settings	<p>The choices for reading back text typed by the user.</p> <p><i>Letter by letter:</i> each letter is spoken as it is typed</p> <p><i>Word:</i> each word is spoken after it is typed</p> <p><i>Sentence:</i> each sentence is spoken after it is completed with ending punctuation (period, exclamation point, or question mark).</p> <p><i>All:</i> the entire text is spoken.</p> <p>Note that some programs read back text that is selected by the user and do not speak it as the user types.</p>

Voice Choices	Whether the user can select the voice used for speech readback.
Rate Settings	Whether the user can control the speed at which text is spoken.
Pronunciation Exceptions	Whether the user can control how specified words are pronounced. For example one child might pronounce her name Diane as “Dy-ane” whereas another child named Diane might pronounce it as “Dee-ane.”
Symbol Menu	Whether the program provides picture menus to allow non-readers to understand them.
Spell Check	Whether the program offers the ability to check and/or correct the spelling of words that the user types.
Grammar Check	Whether the program offers the ability to check and/or correct the grammatical construction of the sentences that the user types.
Visual Supports	Whether the user can control the color of the text and/or background color of the window used to display text on the screen, and any other visual aids, such as highlighting of text.
Graphics	Whether the program offers the ability to combine text and graphics and whether a library of graphics is included with the program.
Sound Effects	Whether the program offers the ability to include sounds with the text and whether a library of sounds is included with the program.
Other Settings and Features	Additional capabilities of each program are included here. These may be the features that distinguish one program from the others in the chart.
Also appropriate at:	Other Stages at which this title may be appropriate are listed. You may need to change settings within the software to make it function suitably for learners at these other Stages. Using software at more than one Stage can help reinforce prior learning, introduce new concepts in a familiar environment, and extend the useful life of software in your collection.

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	AppleWorks*	BuildAbility	Clicker 4	eReader
Publisher	Apple	Don Johnston, Inc.	Crick Software	CAST
Platform	Mac	Mac / Win	Mac, Win	Mac, Win
TTS/Speech Readback	reads user highlighted words.		reads clicked words, highlighted words	
letter				
word			(highlighted words)	
sentence				
all (letter, word, sentence)	(highlighted words)			
Voice Options				
Voice choices	(select in speech control panel)		(can also change pitch)	
Rate settings				
Pronunciation exceptions				
Symbol menu available?				
Spell check			(also provides alternate words for "over-used" words)	none - designed as a reader
Grammar check				
Visual supports	text color choice options	highlights text during speech feedback	can display graphics as learner types words (customizable)	text and background color choices
Graphics	many types	includes collection of images, movies, or import your own	includes Mayer-Johnson PCS Library, Crick Picture Library, custom library	
Sound effects		(includes sound files, can import)	(can import/record MIDI and .wav files to replace TTS)	
Other settings and features:	*Formerly <i>ClarisWorks for Kids</i>	create multimedia stories and animated "flip book;" includes Library Sampler CD of templates and setups for Discover:Switch, Screen and Board; switch-accessible with scanning options	picture from library pops up when its name is typed (customizable); animations using optional module; can disable tools (Print, Undo); "Easy Editing" feature for teacher; can save as HTML (web format); switch-accessible	learner can open any text; software adjusts to detailed individual preferences
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6; also teacher tool for other Stages	Stage 5, Stage 6

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	IntelliTalk®†	IntelliTalk II	Intellitalk III	Kid Works Deluxe
Publisher	IntelliTools, Inc.	IntelliTools, Inc.	IntelliTools, Inc.	Knowledge Adventure (Davidson)
Platform	Mac, Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win	Mac / Win
TTS/Speech Readback			highlights words read	
letter				
word				
sentence				
all (letter, word, sentence)				
Voice Options				
Voice choices				(limited choices)
Rate settings				
Pronunciation exceptions				
Symbol menu available?		(customizable)	(customizable)	
Spell check		(includes pictures and words)		
Grammar check				
Visual supports	text and background color choices	highlights words read; text and background color choices	text size/color and background color choices	limited text color choice
Graphics		(can import)	(clip art library, can import)	
Sound effects		(can record)	(can record)	
Other settings and features:	toggle picture; standard menus; large insertion point in edit menu; †this program is no longer available from its manufacturer; it has been replaced by IntelliTalk II	locked text can create word bank; custom palettes offer custom menu and input options; built-in access features for IntelliKeys and switches; usable by nonreaders	Lock text, word banks. Onscreen alphabet, graphics. Word prediction. Embedded help. Portfolio management including assignment/progress tracking. Authoring templates, sample activities, and tutorials.	user adds sounds and stickers; symbol/word toggle
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	Language Experience Recorder	Make-a-Book	PixWriter	Read & Write 5.0
Publisher	Teacher Support Software	Teacher Support Software	Slater Software	TextHELP Systems Ltd.
Platform	Mac / DOS / Apple II	Mac / Win	Mac, Win	Win
TTS/Speech Readback				
letter				
word				
sentence				
all (letter, word, sentence)				
Voice Options				
Voice choices		(can also set volume, pitch)		(can also set pitch, tone, pause, volume)
Rate settings				
Pronunciation exceptions				
Symbol menu available?			(customizable)	
Spell check		(Spell check and Thesaurus in Windows version only)	(includes pictures and words)	
Grammar check				(Limited. Grammar levels, writing style options)
Visual supports	text and background color choices	text color and background color choices	text and background color choices	colors: background, text, highlighting, prediction
Graphics		(clip art library; can import)	(can import)	
Sound effects				
Other settings and features:	several word analysis features; Speak and Spell menu option; provides readability level for learner text	can import text files, print options include 3 book sizes, borders, footer with author and date	button setup option can create word bank	utilities with options for customizing text reading, spell checking, word prediction, thesaurus, homonyms, word wizard, abbreviation expansion
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 4, Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	Scan and Read Pro	Storybook Maker Deluxe	Storybook Weaver DELUXE	The Talking Word Processor
Publisher	Premier Assistive Technology, Inc.	CompassLearning, Inc.	The Learning Company, now Riverdeep	Premier Assistive Technology, Inc.
Platform	Win	Mac / Win	Mac / Win	Win
TTS/Speech Readback			reads what user types	
letter				
word				
sentence				
all (letter, word, sentence)				
Voice Options				
Voice choices				
Rate settings				
Pronunciation exceptions				
Symbol menu available?				
Spell check			(spell check doesn't correct but helps student retype)	
Grammar check				
Visual supports	text and background color choices, highlights words read	text color choice	text color choice	text and background color choices, highlights words read
Graphics	generic			generic
Sound effects				
Other settings and features:	Word Prediction; can add user library; main library is very large; scanning capabilities, has thesaurus; can save in MP3 format; affordable OCR/Reading software	user can add video; pictures have word labels	includes thesaurus	Also includes word prediction which can be turned off or on, can customize user libraries, can highlight and track; affordable talking word processor
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	Type and Talk 4.0	Write:OutLoud 3.0	Write This Way
Publisher	TextHELP Systems Ltd.	Don Johnston, Inc.	CompassLearning Inc.
Platform	Win	Mac / Win	Mac diskette
TTS/Speech Readback			
letter			
word			
sentence			
all (letter, word, sentence)			
Voice Options			
Voice choices			(can also select pitch)
Rate settings			(3 rates)
Pronunciation exceptions			
Symbol menu available?	(standard and advanced toolbars)		
Spell check	(customizable, phonetic)	(presents words in context and spells/reads words)	(corrects word by word and reads choices)
Grammar check			
Visual supports	many color coding options, font sizes up to 72 pt.	Text and background color choices	text color choice
Graphics		(can add pictures)	
Sound effects			
Other settings and features:	editable word prediction list, homonym support, thesaurus, Word Wizard, screen reader	Talking Dictionary; includes setups for alternative access with Discover:Switch, Screen and Board;	
Also appropriate at:	Stage 4, Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Talking Word Processors

Title	WriteAway 2000	Writing with Assessment	Writing with Symbols 2000
Publisher	Information Services, Inc.	Teacher Support Software	Mayer-Johnson Company
Platform	Win	Mac / Win	Win
TTS/Speech Readback			
letter			
word			
sentence			
all (letter, word, sentence)			
Voice Options			
Voice choices			
Rate settings			
Pronunciation exceptions			
Symbol menu available?			(8000+ Boardmaker symbols)
Spell check		(reads aloud)	(includes symbols with words and context sentence)
Grammar check			
Visual supports	text and background color choices	text color	text and background color choices
Graphics		(clip art library; can import)	Boardmaker symbols
Sound effects			
Other settings and features:	abbreviation expansion; prediction list supports phrases; scanning; also reads menu items and word prediction list	thesaurus, detailed story analysis, word review, speak and spell option; can import own text files; extensive management and assessment features	
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

Writing Tools / Written Language & Syntax Development Chart

Because these titles have a very different focus from the Talking Writing Software programs, this chart compares a different set of features, which are listed and explained below.

The following terms are used in the Writing Tools and Written Language & Syntax Development chart.

Title	The name of the software program.
Publisher	The name of the company that produces or distributes the software.
Platform	<p>The types of computers that can run the software.</p> <p><i>Mac:</i> Macintosh® computers</p> <p><i>Win:</i> PC computers running the Windows® operating system</p> <p><i>DOS:</i> PC computers running the DOS operating system (older models)</p> <p><i>Apple II:</i> early computer from Apple® Computer, Inc. Software is available on CD-ROM, unless otherwise noted.</p> <p><i>Mac/Win:</i> This software is available for both platforms on the same CD.</p> <p><i>Mac, Win:</i> This software is available for both platforms, but may be packaged separately.</p>
Access Options	<p>The types of input methods that the program supports.</p> <p><i>Keyboard:</i> You can use a standard or alternative keyboard such as IntelliKeys® or an accessible onscreen keyboard.</p> <p><i>Mouse:</i> You can use a standard mouse or mouse emulator, which you can use to point and click.</p> <p><i>Touchscreen:</i> You can use a touchscreen, either built into the computer or attached to a monitor.</p> <p><i>IntelliKeys:</i> This program is set up to use an IntelliKeys® alternative keyboard from IntelliTools, Inc.</p> <p><i>Switch:</i> You can use a switch with this program.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Any other methods supported by the software.</p>

Curriculum Area	The main topics addressed in the software.
Content	More detailed information about the content in the software.
Feedback Type	How the software handles errors made by the learner.
Graphics	Whether the graphics are appropriate for Child or Teen/Adult learners. (Not compared in Writing Tools.)
Record Keeping	The data that is collected by the software to keep track of the learner's actions while using the program. In these charts, a reference to "Time" indicates the amount of time spent on the activity. (Not compared in Writing Tools.)
Can activity be saved and/or printed?	Whether the software allows the activity or screen to be saved or printed. (Generally, the screen image can also be captured using system keystrokes, such as <⌘-shift-3> on the Macintosh or <alt><print screen> on a Windows machine.)
Customizing Options	The main features of the program that can be adjusted for an individual learner.
Keyboard Shortcuts	Major keystroke commands for changing settings, ending an activity, and exiting the program.
Other Settings and Features	Additional capabilities of each program are included here.
Also appropriate at:	Other Stages at which this title may be appropriate are listed. You may need to change settings within the software to make it function suitably for learners at these other Stages. Using software at more than one Stage can help reinforce prior learning, introduce new concepts in a familiar environment, and extend the useful life of software in your collection.

Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Adjectives & Opposites	Balanced Literacy	Book Quiz, Book Quiz: Julie of the Wolves
Publisher	Laureate Learning Systems	IntelliTools, Inc.	IntelliTools, Inc.
Platform	Mac / Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	√ (space for scan)	√	√
Mouse	√	√	√
Touchscreen	√		√
IntelliKeys®		√ (includes many overlays)	√ (overlays available)
Switch	√ (auto, step/dwell, can set rate)	√ (auto, step, directional)	√ (can set rate)
Other		√	
Curriculum	language arts, vocabulary	reading/writing	Language Arts, Reading, Writing
Content	5 scenes with clickable animals, objects, or people demonstrating adjectives or opposites; "Explore," "Train" and "Identify" activities	early literacy instruction; integrates guided reading, supported writing, word study/phonics activities	<i>Book Quiz:</i> IntelliTalk Template. Main elements of a story. <i>Julie of the Wolves:</i> IntelliTalk Activity. Multimedia presentation, quiz, book report.
Feedback	visual cue and voice feedback	feedback guides learning	
Auditory			√
Visual			√
Multisensory	√ (music optional)	√	√
Graphics	child	child	child, teen (customizable)
Record keeping	user log saves date, time, title, duration, scores	save and print summary or detailed records, set up users, classes, groups	Reports date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.
Can activity be saved or printed?	can print report	can print most writing activities	saved in student portfolio, can print all reports and activities
Customization options	can set number of items on screen	scan: highlight, beep, review activities: graphics, text, both	Customizable toolbars, word banks. Word prediction options, can change voice/rate, user interface.
Keyboard shortcuts	<esc>: exit, <⌘/ctrl+H>: hide cursor, <⌘/ctrl+space>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+P>: pause	<⌘/ctrl+N>: options/navigation	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences
Other settings and features	level settings, animation on/off, large cursor option, sound volume, criteria for advancing levels, ending activity, background black or scene	book options: low vision, continuous, read aloud	Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Fully customizable, can import graphics, video, audio.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 4, Stage 5	Stage 5, Stage 6

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Co:Writer 4000	Early Emerging Rules Series	Easy Writing Football
Publisher	Don Johnston, Inc.	Laureate Learning Systems	IntelliTools, Inc.
Platform	Mac / Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	✓	✓	✓
Mouse	✓	✓	✓
Touchscreen		✓	✓
IntelliKeys®			✓ (overlays available)
Switch	✓	✓ (auto, step)	✓
Other	Discover setups for switch access.		
Curriculum	writing tool	reading readiness, language development	Language Arts, Reading, Writing
Content	word prediction program	three separate titles: Negations, Plurals, Prepositions; contain explore and assess activities	IntelliTalk III activity. Students develop reading and writing skills by creating sentences about football in an errorless format
Feedback		2 incorrect responses allowed.	
Auditory	✓	✓	
Visual	✓	✓ (correct item flashes when incorrect)	✓
Multisensory	✓	✓	
Graphics	N/A	child and teen	customizable - child, teen
Record keeping		Activity, date/time, items completed, # and % correct, settings, time to complete, comments	Reports date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.
Can activity be saved or printed?	can save and print settings; and save collected words	can print report	Saves student portfolio data. Can print all reports and activities
Customization options	personal dictionary; total vocabulary system integrates dictionaries used	can hide/show menus or mouse cursor	Customizable toolbars, quizzes, word banks, optional word prediction, can change voice/rate, user interface, can assign students specific activities.
Keyboard shortcuts	<⌘/ctrl+M>: talk mode; <⌘/ctrl+S>: save words	<esc>: exit lesson, <⌘/ctrl+D>: define lesson	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences
Other settings and features	speech feedback	manuals review recent research describing the program's rationale	Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Fully customizable, can import graphics, video, audio.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4	Stage 5, Stage 6

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Fairy Tale, Fairy Tale: Goldilocks	Inspiration	IntelliPics Studio III Report Template
Publisher	IntelliTools, Inc.	Inspiration Software, Inc.	IntelliTools, Inc.
Platform	Mac, Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	√	√	√
Mouse	√	√	√
Touchscreen	√		√
IntelliKeys®	√ (overlays available)		√ (overlays available)
Switch	√		√ (can set rate)
Other		AlphaSmart keyboard as pre-writing tool	
Curriculum	Language Arts, Reading, Writing	writing tool	All
Content	Sequencing and writing activities. <i>Fairy Tale</i> : IntelliTalk template. <i>Goldilocks</i> : IntelliTalk activity.	develops organization skills and concept development through linear and visual thinking	Non-linear tool to create book reports or present research or other projects. Allows opportunity to create an electronic, oral presentation.
Feedback			
Auditory	√		
Visual	√		√
Multisensory	√		
Graphics	child, teen (customizable)	N/A	customizable
Record keeping	Reports date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.		Reports date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.
Can activity be saved or printed?	Saves student portfolio data. Can print all reports and activities	√	Saves student portfolio data. Can print all reports and activities
Customization options	Customizable toolbars, quizzes, word banks, optional word prediction, can change voice/rate, user interface, assign students specific activities.		Customizable toolbars, quizzes, word banks, optional word prediction, can change voice/rate, user interface, can assign students specific activities.
Keyboard shortcuts	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences	<⌘/ctrl+S>: save	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences
Other settings and features	Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Fully customizable, can import graphics, video, audio.	spell check; visual diagram templates; auto correction; abbreviation expansion	Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Fully customizable, can import graphics, video, audio. Provides 3 collections of animal pictures: mammals, insects and birds.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Kidspiration	Micro-LADS: 1-7	Romeo and Juliet
Publisher	Inspiration Software, Inc.	Laureate Learning Systems	IntelliTools, Inc.
Platform	Mac / Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	√	√	√
Mouse	√	√	√
Touchscreen		√	√
IntelliKeys®			√ (overlays available)
Switch		√ (auto, step)	√
Other			
Curriculum	writing tool, graphic organizer	language development	Language Arts, Reading, Writing
Content	visual mapping, symbols and links help to organize and develop ideas; picture view links to writing view	7 volumes of activities to develop early syntax & basic grammatical constructions, vocab. & sentence structure	Structure and rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet. Reading vocabulary and comprehension. IntelliTalk Activity.
Feedback		incorrect: after incorrect response, correct answer is shown	
Auditory		√	√
Visual		√	√
Multisensory	√	√	√
Graphics	can import	generic	customizable - child, teen
Record keeping		learner name, time, activity, topic, number and percent correct	Date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.
Can activity be saved or printed?	√	can print report	saved in student portfolio, can print all reports and activities
Customization options	talking interface: menus buttons, can record own sounds, editable user dictionary	show/hide menus and mouse cursor	Customizable toolbars, quizzes, word banks, optional word prediction, can change voice/rate, user interface, can assign students specific activities.
Keyboard shortcuts		<esc>: exit, <⌘/ctrl+H>: hide cursor, <⌘/ctrl+space>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+P>: pause	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences
Other settings and features	45 templates, listen tool, spell check, hide desktop, visual formatting: background color, Super Grouper categories allow groupings of symbols for outlines/writing		Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Fully customizable, can import graphics, video, audio.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4, Stage 5	Stage 6

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Show Me Spelling	Simon Spells	Simple Sentence Structure
Publisher	Attainment Company	Don Johnston, Inc.	Laureate Learning Systems
Platform	Mac / Win	Mac	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	√ (required to type response)	√ (required to type response)	√
Mouse		√	√
Touchscreen	√	√	√
IntelliKeys®			
Switch			√ (auto, step)
Other		Discover:Switch, Ke:nx to type in response	
Curriculum	language arts	language arts	written language and syntax development
Content	spelling skills (choose from verbs, adjectives, 5-letter words)	spelling skills	Subject-verb-object word order in sentences (contrasting verbs, objects, subjects and subject/object reversal)
Feedback	practice: tone for incorrect response; quiz allows 1 response	correct response shown alongside incorrect responses	2 incorrect responses allowed
Auditory	√		√
Visual	√	√	√ (correct item flashes when incorrect)
Multisensory			√
Graphics	child	child	child and teen
Record keeping	Number correct out of total.	list of words spelled (correctly and incorrectly); save student options	activity, date/time, items completed, # and % correct, settings, time to complete, comments
Can activity be saved or printed?	can save most recent scores in each area	can print lesson, worksheets	can print report
Customization options	create and save custom word lists	choose number of words and lists to customize level of difficulty	can alter preference settings
Keyboard shortcuts	<⌘/ctrl+T>: menu; <⌘/ctrl+B>: finder; <space> or <enter>: select response; <⌘/ctrl+W>: word lists	<⌘/ctrl+T>: options, <⌘/ctrl+M>: menu	<esc>: exit lesson; <⌘/ctrl+space>: menu
Other settings and features	can hide finder and menu bar to reduce distraction and disable sound effects, music and speech	documentation includes complete word list that indicates frequency, grade level, pattern, and if word is Dolch	data collection; feedback for incorrect responses; six levels of training; manual includes rationale for activities based on research in language development
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 5	Stage 5

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Spell-A-Word	Spelling Works	Stanley's Sticker Stories
Publisher	RJ Cooper & Assoc.	Teacher Support Software	Edmark, now Riverdeep
Platform	Mac, Win	Mac / Win	Mac / Win
Access options			
Keyboard		√	√ (required to type stories)
Mouse	√	√	√
Touchscreen	√		√
IntelliKeys®			
Switch	√ (auto)		
Other			
Curriculum	language arts	language arts	writing, vocabulary
Content	spelling skills	spelling: graded lists of words most often needed for writing, interactive practice, games, tests	learners create animated books using drag/drop "stickers" and music
Feedback	incorrect responses: character appears and sound plays (no limit)	Feedback guides learning.	
Auditory	√	√	√ (can set volume in Mac version)
Visual			
Multisensory		√	auditory tutorial with visual cues
Graphics	child	child	N/A
Record keeping	date, number correct, number of drills and tests completed, previous and last session scores	activities: scored, not saved, tests: printable, not saved	
Can activity be saved or printed?	can save and print session data		can print page or book
Customization options	add custom graphics and sound; change number of drills and tests	choose word lists, select voice, animation on/off, volume control	can type text and/or record text as sound files for each page
Keyboard shortcuts	<shift+ `>: exit to menu	⌘L or <ctrl+W>: word list; ⌘H or <ctrl+S>: get hint	<ctrl+alt+A> or <⌘+option+A>: adult options, <⌘/ctrl+Q>: quit
Other settings and features	custom recorded names help personalize the program	visual highlighting, speak spelling, word, sentence, easy to navigate	set help response time, sound recording/music, printing, text. Individual/group preferences; text can be adjusted for learners with low vision.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 5	Stage 2, Stage 3 (using stories without text)

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Swim, Swam, Swum	UltraKey	WordQ
Publisher	Laureate Learning Systems	Bytes of Learning	Quillsoft
Platform	Mac / Win	Mac / Win	Win
Access options			
Keyboard	✓	✓	✓
Mouse	✓	✓	✓
Touchscreen	✓		
IntelliKeys®			
Switch	✓ (auto, step)		
Other			
Curriculum	written language and syntax development	keyboarding tutor	writing tool
Content	high-frequency irregular verb training (reinforces reading and spelling skills)	keyboarding program with 5 main learning activities: Posture, Fingers, Lessons, Skill Check and Typing Forum	works with standard Windows word processing programs to provide help in spelling, grammar and punctuation
Feedback			
Auditory	✓	✓ (optional)	✓
Visual	✓	✓	
Multisensory		✓	
Graphics	generic	3D animation, graphics, video	N/A
Record keeping	number correct, time on activity, activity name, feedback type, instructor notes		
Can activity be saved or printed?	can print report	saves learner performance data and prints reports	✓
Customization options	can alter preference settings	set up individual learner records and preferences: speech on/off, skin tone selection, change keyboard display (color, framing), change from three	can import text files to customize learner vocabulary
Keyboard shortcuts	<esc>: exit lesson; <⌘/ctrl+space>: toggle menu		
Other settings and features	data collection, feedback for incorrect responses, manual includes language development research rationale.	Learner is encouraged to type letters, words, sentences and paragraphs as a whole unit; auto save; enable/disable editing	speaks predicted words, interface objects, menus, buttons and other window text; read text in other applications; set up individual dictionaries, topic dictionaries, personal words
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 5, Stage 6	Stage 5, Stage 6

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Stage Seven Software Comparison Chart ❖ Writing Tools, Written Language and Syntax

Title	Word Sort	Word Works: Vocabulary Series	Writing About Sea Animals, Writing in Science
Publisher	Henderson Educational Software	Teacher Support Software	IntelliTools, Inc.
Platform	Mac, Win	Mac / Win	Mac, Win
Access options			
Keyboard	✓	✓	✓
Mouse	✓	✓	✓
Touchscreen			✓
IntelliKeys®			✓ (overlays available)
Switch			✓ (can adjust rate)
Other			
Curriculum	language arts	language arts	Language Arts, Reading, Writing, Science
Content	Single syllable words (all vowel and consonant sound/pattern groups); matching words with sample words.	reading/spelling: targets oral, visual word recognition, fluency and word retrieval	<i>Writing About Sea Animals</i> : IntelliTalk III Activity. Multimedia, interactive tool to explore and assess student's understanding of sea animals. <i>Writing in Science</i> : interactive multimedia tool to explore and assess science topics. IntelliTalk III Template.
Feedback	Reviews errors and sorts words correctly.	Feedback guides learning.	
Auditory			
Visual	✓		✓
Multisensory	✓	✓	
Graphics	index card view vs. words only	child	child, teen (can import)
Record keeping	saves sort study results for multiple users	management tool: saves user data, generate class, student reports	date/time, questions, student responses, and percentage scores.
Can activity be saved or printed?	print word sort cards and records		saved in student portfolio, can print all reports and activities
Customization options	assign specific word sort at student's level, set sort speed	purchase desired word list CDs, choose activities, activity options	Customizable toolbars and word banks, can assign students specific activities, customizable quizzes
Keyboard shortcuts		⌘L or <ctrl+W>: word list; ⌘H or <ctrl+S>: get hint	<⌘/ctrl+M>: menu, <⌘/ctrl+shift+O>: preferences
Other settings and features	printed cards provide off-computer extension of word sorting	preview, practice, games and assessments (set criteria, number choices, time)	Part of the IntelliTools Classroom Suite. Word prediction on/off, set voice and rate, user interface. Can import video, audio. <i>Writing in Science</i> provides 3 sets of pictures: mammals, insects, birds.
Also appropriate at:	Stage 5	Stage 5	Stage 6

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Additional Titles Appropriate for Stage Seven:

Ant Quiz (IntelliTalk Activity)	R.A.P.S.
Area of a Triangle (IntelliMathics III Activity)	Reading World
Data Analysis (IntelliMathics III Template)	Science New Reef (IntelliPics III Template)
Data Survey (IntelliMathics III Activity)	Simple Script
Diagram (IntelliTalk Template)	Spelling & Spelling Practice
Diagram Heart (IntelliTalk Activity)	Stories and More: Animal Friends
E-Library	Studywiz
Find Out and Write About Series: Dinosaurs, Animals of Cold Lands, Explorers	Thinkin' Things Collection I, II, III
Fractions (IntelliMathics Template)	Thinking Reader Series: The Giver; Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry; Bridge to Terabithia; Bud, Not Buddy; Tuck Everlasting; Dragonwings; My Brother Sam is Dead; A Wrinkle in Time, Esperanza Rising
Fractions Problems (IntelliMathics Activity)	Time Line (IntelliPics Template)
Fractions Sports (IntelliMathics Activity)	Time Line Egypt (IntelliPics Activity)
From A to Z	Universal Reader
Hands-On Concepts: Five Cuddly Teddies	Using Money
Hands-On Concepts: Old MacDonald's Farm	Volcanoes (IntelliPics Activity)
Hands-On Concepts: The Little Dough Man	WiggleWorks
IntelliMathics III	Word Search 1.1
IntelliPics Studio III	
KidBook	
KidPix Studio Deluxe	
Kurzweil 3000	
Learn More About Words	
Mars (IntelliPics Activity)	
Multiplying by 3	
On the Farm	
Outlining the Middle Ages (IntelliPics Activity)	
Parts of a Set	
Phonics (IntelliTalk Template)	
Phonics Sort (IntelliTalk Activity)	
Planet Wobble Series	